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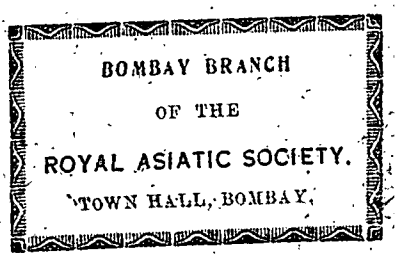

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THE

REVOLUTIONS, INSURRECTIONS,

AND

CONSPIRACIES OF EUROPE.

VOL. I.

THE

REVOLUTIONS, INSURRECTIONS, AND CONSPIRACIES OF EUROPE.

BY

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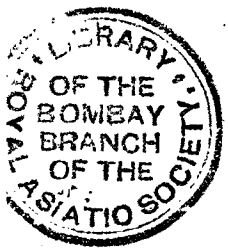
Scribere res gestas carptim.—SALLUST.



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TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

RICHARD WHATELY, D.D.

ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN AND GLENDALOUGH,

THESE VOLUMES

ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY

HIS OBLIGED, GRATEFUL, AND HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

It has been the writer's object in these volumes to trace out the Revolutions by which modern society was framed out of the ruins of ancient civilization; the imperfections which attached to these new systems, and the resistance which these imperfections provoked. M. Girardin justly observes that "the history of the Middle Ages belongs to ourselves;"—all the great questions, political and religious, which still divide mankind came into existence during that period of intellectual darkness, but also of great mental activity. All the inferior powers of the mind were engaged in discussing; none of the superior faculties were summoned to decide. Just as a man groping in the dark will lay hold of many objects which he would not venture to touch in broad day; so men in an age of ignorance, and ignorant men in all ages, will raise questions of momentous importance, decide them with flippant dogmatism, and claim for their crude guesses the attributes of infallibility.

The three great Revolutions which have chiefly generated the social condition of Europe in the Middle Ages appear to have been the political establishment of Christianity;—the establishment of energetic, though almost barbarous, races as an ascendancy over races enfeebled by corrupt civilization;—and the struggle for existence which the system resulting from the former causes had to maintain against the rival system of Mohammedanism while yet in the first fire and vigour of its youth. I have endeavoured to present these Revolutions to modern readers with somewhat of the same aspect which they displayed to their contemporaries, and the persons actually engaged in them. For this purpose I have hunted over old chronicles, searched out legends, and studied ballads; believing it to be important to know, not only how men acted, but how they felt while acting. Evil deeds have been done, and will continue to be done, from the best motives; and we lose no small portion of the benefit of historic example, when we pronounce sentence on a result without bestowing full consideration on its antecedents.

In some respects, a legend is not less valuable to a historical student than an authenticated fact. Granted that the legend is not true; still, men believed it to be true, and they acted on that belief. We cannot beneficially study events independent of concomitant circumstances, and one of the most important circumstances is the real pur-

pose or intention of those by whom they were effected. That which is unreal to one age or individual, may be, and often is, real to another. It is easy to laugh at the delusion; but, probably, a future generation may avenge the object of mockery by laughing at us in our turn.

The course of investigation pursued points to the conclusion that the papal and feudal systems were hurried compromises to avert anarchy of thought, and anarchy of action; and that there was little of predeterminate design in the establishment of either. Both became evil and onerous by attempting to render permanent that which was useful only as a temporary expedient: in general, those who cling most tenaciously to power, are those most incapable of using it aright; and no rulers have more eagerly aspired after perfect despotism, than those who most narrowly escaped from being idiots. Power was bestowed in the hurry of compromise, which fell into hands unable to wield it alone, and unwilling to share it with others. The abuses of power provoked insurrection: we may dispute, if we please, the amount of the provocation, or the prudence of revolt; but let us be fully persuaded that there is no such thing as an unprovoked insurrection in history. In the present volumes, attention has been directed to two great revolts, which, though local in their operations, were almost universal in their influence throughout Christendom. Both were directed

against the feudal system: the first was caused by the efforts of the peasantry to escape from personal bondage; the second was a struggle of the mercantile and middle class to obtain commercial freedom. The Jacquerie of France, and the Whitehoods of Ghent, were but types of parties which have existed ever since in most European countries; and both mooted many questions which remain undecided at the present day.

Conspiracies are of a more isolated character; and they, together with such insurrections as do not possess general and enduring interest, but at the same time illustrate great though isolated principles, are reserved for succeeding volumes.

The Notes have been designedly varied; it was the author's object to collect such illustrative matter as might serve to exhibit social peculiarities of an age or country in a stronger light than direct narrative could afford, and also to impress particular facts on the memory by pleasurable associations. The authorities are for the most part quoted; and, in reference to them, I have to express my obligations to the spirited publisher of an admirable edition of Froissart's Chronicles, for having placed that delightful work within the reach of persons of ordinary means.

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REVOLUTIONS,

INSURRECTIONS, AND CONSPIRACIES

OF EUROPE.

CHAPTER I.

The overthrow of Paganism and establishment of Christianity in the Western Empire. — First Epoch : The struggle of Christianity for equality.

FOURTEEN centuries have elapsed since the overthrow of Paganism,—its temples are ruins, its altars have crumbled into dust, and its idols have been broken to pieces; but, though its physical empire has been destroyed, no small portion of its intellectual supremacy survives, and exercises a powerful influence, not only on the imagination, but the judgment. Its graceful fictions, its social sports, the manners which it formed, the writings which it dictated, and the monuments which it raised, still excite our liveliest sympathies; and, if we attentively examine certain anomalous usages and superstitious practices still subsisting in vari-

ous Christian communities, we cannot fail to recognize the manifest imprints of a system of polytheism which entered into every detail of public and private life, and moulded every element of human society. The revolution by which such a system was overthrown, was not the mere substitution of one religion for another; the triumph of Christianity over Idolatry was a political, a social, and a moral, as well as a religious revolution: when it was consummated, it might with truth be said, "Old things are passed away; behold, all things have become new." * The importance of the epoch during which this revolution was effected in ecclesiastical history, has led most writers to confine their attention almost exclusively to the religious change: the devout Christian and the sneering sceptic have equally limited their attention to the controversy of creeds, and have very faintly intimated that this controversy was in fact but part of a struggle between two social systems, neither of which could exist without the total destruction of the other.

If it were desirable, it would be scarcely possible for a believer in Christianity to write the history of this contest with perfect indifference to the issue; he cannot forget, — and, even if he could, it is very doubtful whether he ought, — that truth was arrayed against falsehood, and a religion of purity against a creed that sanctified

* 2 Cor. v. 17.

many gross abominations; but, without exposing himself to the imputation of undervaluing the blessings derived from the triumph of the Gospel, he may do justice to those who were defeated in the contest, afford pity to their errors, and not withhold sympathy from their sufferings. There is nothing gained by recording the struggles of expiring Paganism in a spirit of invective and sarcasm: while recounting the ruin of its temples, the overthrow of its altars, and the dispersion of its pontiffs, it is impossible to forget that for many ages it had exercised commanding influence over large masses of mankind; that it had formed a state of society which, however imperfect, had afforded scope for the developement of many heroic virtues; and that it had produced arts, sciences, and a literature by which mankind is still delighted, profited, and instructed. With these feelings we enter on the examination of Roman polytheism, in order to discover what were the elements both of its strength and of its weakness when it was brought into collision with Christianity.

A very slight comparison between the mythologies of Greece and Rome will show that the polytheism of the Greeks was essentially poetical, and that of the Romans exclusively political. The gods of the early Greeks were almost all warriors, but the favourite objects of worship among the Romans were the agricultural deities: their

founder, Romulus himself, was one of the twelve priests selected to preside over rural sacrifices; the rest, according to tradition, being the eleven sons of his nurse, Acca Laurentia.* The god Terminus, originally a shapeless rock, such as in the earlier ages of almost every nation we find men selecting as a type or emblem of the mysterious powers of nature, was one of the most sacred objects of Roman worship; it consecrated at once the sanctity of boundaries, the rights of property, and the extension of empire. It is pretty certain, that, before the age of the epic poets, the religion of Greece, like that of the eastern nations, was purely *elementary*,† that is, founded on the adoration of some object or power of nature; but these symbolical representations were early dismissed, and the Greek gods became "moral persons."‡ But symbolical worship was retained by the Etruscans, and by them transmitted to the Romans, a great portion of whose

* Festus.

† Æschylus alludes to the change in the Greek religion, and insinuates that it was typified by the fable of the wars between the gods and the Titans.

‡ "When we call them *moral* persons, we do not mean to say that a higher degree of moral purity was attributed to them than humanity can attain; indeed, the contrary is well enough known: but, rather, that the whole moral nature of man, with its defects and its excellencies, was considered as belonging to them, but with the additional notions of superior physical force, a more delicately organized system, and a more exalted, if not always a more beautiful form."—HEEREN.

religion was originally derived from Etruria.* At the rustic festivals in honour of Terminus † the neighbours met together to crown with flowers their common land-mark; whilst the mysterious stone which was more specially the emblem of the national deity, appeared, by its immovable position in the temple of the Tarpeian Jupiter, to guarantee the eternal duration of Roman victory and success.

A conformity of opinions tending to the same end in different ages and nations, is a very strong proof that both have originated in premeditated design. When we find that the Romans regarded it as a sacrilege to give any retrograde movement to the god Terminus, and that the Turks have ever maintained the same principle in reference to their mosques,‡ it is scarcely possible to avoid coming to the conclusion that both races sought security for their empires by representing the preservation of their conquests as a religious duty.

Although the Romans did not adopt so rigid a system of caste as that which prevailed in Etruria, it is evident, from their early history, that they recognized a distinction of races sanctioned by

* Several other traces of the worship of stones may be found in Roman polytheism; for instance, when there was a long drought, a sacred stone, called the *Lapis manalis*, was paraded through the city with great solemnity.—Festus.

† The best account of the worship of the god Terminus will be found in the Memoirs of the Academy of Inscriptions, i. 50.

‡ Segred, Hist. de l'Emp. Ottoman, i. 42.

religious institutions, if not based on religious traditions. It was held as immutable law, that plebeians could not "take the auspices;" that is, perform the most important religious ceremonies: and it was on this ground that the law for allowing intermarriages between the patricians and the plebeians was most strenuously resisted.* The various ecclesiastical corporations were essentially aristocratic; and the senate itself acted in a hierarchical character, for it alone could authorize the consultation of the Sibylline books, and the admission of a new deity into the calendar. The connection between the priesthood and the magistracy in the republic was not so much a union between church and state, as an identification of the church with the ruling powers of the state. It was the obvious interest of the patricians to give the utmost prominence to the sacerdotal character of their order, and they effected this by uniting every public act of state with some appropriate religious ceremony.

After the third Punic war, the Romans made themselves masters of eastern Europe with a facility which astonished the conquerors, and which left no permanent enmity between them and the vanquished. But, while Rome gained a physical triumph, Greece effected an intellectual conquest: †

* "Indignum diis visum honores vulgari, discriminaque gentium confundi."—Liv. v. 4.

† "Græcia capta ferum victorem cepit, et artes
Intulit agresti Latio."—Hor. Epist. ii.

the arts, the literature, and the very language of Latium was Hellenized; its religion alone remained national. This partly arose from the Grecian mythology having been amalgamated with the Etruscan; as, for instance, when Consus was identified with Neptune, and Sancus, or Dius Fidius, with Hercules: but it must mainly be attributed to the exertions of the senate, who lost no opportunity of recommending to the people the objects of their native worship. Not content with having deified Romulus, the personified city was itself declared a divinity, and thus piety and patriotism formed in Rome but one sentiment. No other metropolis had a religion so intensely national; for what foreigners could worship at the Roman altars, to supplicate for the continuance of a power which bowed the whole of the known world beneath its yoke?

The political institutions of the republic owed their entire strength to the religious sanctions with which they were associated, and could not be shaken so long as that veneration continued unimpaired. As the revolution in France was, to a great degree, matured by the Encyclopediasts, whom the nobles patronized without foreseeing that scepticism is a foe to all established institutions, so the civil tumults which devastated Italy during the later ages of the republic were in a great degree owing to the spirit of the Grecian philosophy, which cast doubt on everything that polytheism

believed, and denounced as scandalous much that polytheism held sacred. Many of the Roman cultivators of philosophy clearly saw the danger to which their speculations were leading, and frequently urged the necessity of maintaining the national religion as a valuable political institution. The Stoic, Balbus, averred that men ought to continue the worship of the gods, because the custom had been handed down from generation to generation: * and Cicero, whose philosophic works contain many mortal blows against the religion of his country, declared that it was the duty of a wise man to remain faithful to the institutions and ceremonies which antiquity had consecrated; † and that it was necessary to maintain religion, for the purpose of restraining the people, and preserving the constitution.‡

It was a fatal error committed by many, both of the French and the Roman aristocracy, to suppose that the influence of religion can be maintained over the populace when it is ostentatiously neglected by the upper classes. Some ambitious aspirant of their own order is sure to betray the secret, and to make it the foundation of his own personal greatness. A Mirabeau, or a Gracchus, can always find excuses for deserting his order, and exposing the fallacy of the pretensions on which its privileges are founded. The successive

* Cic. de Nat. Deor. ii. 28. † Id. de Divin. ii. 72.
‡ Id. ib. ii. 33.

revolutions of France, and the civil wars of Rome, had a like termination; both ended in the establishment of imperial power, which was speedily followed by the restoration of the ancient worship. Never did any religious system seem more devoted to speedy ruin than Roman polytheism during the last century of the republic; it was assailed not merely by the corrupt and daring spirits to which every species of restraint is odious, but by men of rank, intelligence, and high moral character; on the contrary, infidelity had for its organs and apologists those citizens whom their social position and rare talents called to the defence of everything that was useful and honourable in the country. Even the most conservative of Roman statesmen* openly avowed his contempt for the ancient ritual, declaring that he was astonished how one augur could look in the face of another without laughing. When the opinions on which the civil and religious constitution of the republic rested were thus shaken to their foundation, it seemed as if the storm of civil commotion would hurl them to ruin; but, by an unexampled series of events, the greatest political convulsion that ever rent a state in sunder terminated in re-establishing the ancient institutions of

* Cicero, de Div.—The sentiments of Benjamin Constant on this subject are worthy of attention: "We know that the *beau idéal* of certain statesmen, but this flattering chimera can never be realised; they count too much upon our good-nature when they expect us long to believe that which our rulers discredit."—Du Polythéisme Romain, liv. XII. ch. ii.

Rome in their pristine strength and with more than their former security.

The cause of this great and unparalleled result is to be found in the condition of human society during the later ages of the republic. The great defect of the republican constitution was a definite organization of the central power. The annual election of the supreme magistrates, the ill-defined privileges of the senate, the anomalous position of the tribunes, and the direct intervention of the entire people in the enactment of laws, were elements of confusion which could never, without some external compression, settle down into an organic constitution. Annual sovereigns, and universal suffrage, were, in fact, nothing better than yearly strife and general dissatisfaction. Every citizen, whether he belonged to the aristocratic or the democratic faction, perfectly comprehended the weakness of the ancient institutions, and saw the necessity of having a permanent power established somewhere. Even Lucan, the devoted eulogist of republican usages, declares that the consular government had become an intolerable nuisance:

> "The shameful magistrates were made for gold,
> And a base people by themselves were sold;
> Hence slaughter in the venal field returns,
> And Rome her yearly competition mourns."*

* Pharsalia, I.

Never did any change less deserve the name of revolution than that by which the empire of the Cæsars was established. All the ancient traditions of the country were restored to their former ascendancy; none of the old republican institutions were abolished, save those which had become a permanent cause of confusion. Such was the efficacy of this new organization of the sovereign power, that all the social elements, and religion itself, resumed their ancient influence as if by a miracle. The bonds which had united polytheism with the state were drawn tighter; and Augustus, to point out the renewal of this alliance, joined the pontificate to the imperial dignity, and erected the altar of Victory in the senate-house. This was assuredly a more beneficial result than if Inevitable Destiny had been substituted for all the gods by the stoicism of Brutus, or Impiety raised to the rank of religion by the Epicurean philosophy of Cassius.

An attentive study of the two first centuries of the empire is calculated to excite surprise at the ease with which Roman polytheism resumed the enjoyment of all its ancient prerogatives. It reappeared everywhere powerful and venerated; its oracles, so long silent, resumed their voice and were heard with respect; crowds began to flock to the deserted temples, the blood of victims streamed upon the neglected altars, and clouds of incense began once more to ascend to heaven.

The soldiers marched to battle with the symbols of their deities displayed on their banners, the senate deliberated in the presence of the national palladium, and the highest ambition of most of the provinces was to have their ancient deities recognized as citizens of the Roman pantheon. It would seem as if polytheism sought to strengthen itself against any new dangers by courting the alliance of foreign superstitions and barbaric rituals, all of which were collected round imperial majesty as their centre, while that majesty itself was invested with the attributes of deity.

We have already seen that Roman polytheism was a political system intimately blended with the preservation of the ascendancy and privileges of the patrician aristocracy. Of that aristocracy the emperor was the recognized head, and therefore every care was taken to represent him not merely as the associate of their gods, but as their living representative on earth, and almost the incarnation of the national religion. Thus, the oath "By the safety and genius of the emperor!" instituted by a solemn vote of the senate after the murder of Julius Cæsar,* was held more strict and sacred than those oaths in which the names of the deities were invoked. Caligula considered the refusal or omission of an oath "by his genius" as an overt act of treason, and punished it accord-

* Dio, lib. xliv.

ingly;"* and one of the most affecting pages of ecclesiastical history records, that the life of the venerable Polycarp would have been spared if he had consented to swear "by the fortunes of the emperor." †

Rome was the metropolis of the polytheism as well as of the government of the empire. The nations of Western Europe, in particular, regarded Rome as a sacred city, the sanctuary of their hopes, and the point to which all their aspirations should be directed; whilst the Greeks, with their usual exaggeration, declared that the ground on which it stood was a portion, not of earth, but heaven.‡ The wealthy aristocracy, invested with numerous pontifical dignities, and leading in its train a crowd of clients and freedmen, dazzled the popular imagination by the gorgeous magnificence of its religious solemnities, and, at the same time, gratified the populace by largesses of corn and shows of gladiators.§ Those games of the circus, those sanguinary exhibitions of the amphitheatre,

* Sueton., Vita Calig. xxvii.—On the same principle, Henry VIII. condemned Sir Thomas More to death for refusing the oath of supremacy.

† This extravagant adulation survived the overthrow of polytheism, for in the council of Ephesus we find that an oath was taken, "By the Holy and Consubstantial Trinity, and by the Piety and Victory of the two masters of the world, Flavius Theodosius, and Flavius Valentianus, the emperors."—Cotel. Patr. Apost. ii.

‡ Libanii Epistolæ, 1083.

§ "Idololatria, ludorum omnium mater."—St. Cyprian.

and those splendid processions, which afforded such delight to the idle and profligate commonalty of Rome, were not only connected with polytheism, but formed an essential part of its ritual; so that the established religion was the source of pride and power to the nobles, of amusement and sustenance to the people.

So long as the emperors remained at the head of the patrician aristocracy, it was their obvious interest to maintain all the prejudices by which the privileges of that body were supported: but when the armies ostentatiously set aside the authority of the senate, and raised their generals to the purple, they dispensed with those religious ceremonies which the senate alone could authorise; and the subsequent ritual of installation, accorded to victory, was regarded as a mere form, and as such was sometimes neglected. Polytheism, thus stripped of its political importance, lost the chief element of its vitality, for it had no moral principle on which it could draw for new aliment; it became nothing more than the external official religion of the Roman empire. Its temples, its pontiffs, and its emblems, —the errors, the customs, and the habits they had created, existed everywhere, but *faith* was nowhere. The creed of paganism could never have had any hold on the reason, and its fabulous traditions became wearisome to the imagination. In the absence of a definite creed, a taste was formed for the most absurd and degrading superstitious prac-

tices; entire classes of society were impelled by this insane taste, not merely to the most ridiculous actions, but the most abominable crimes, until the insanity of magic was almost the only remaining proof that religion had once been powerful amongst the Romans.

The polytheism of Western Europe was identified with a special locality: so long as Rome remained the metropolis of the empire, the gods of the Capitol were able to defy all competition; every act of administration was performed in their presence, and sanctioned by their names; but when the imperial majesty was dissevered from the Roman aristocracy, and placed at the head of a military despotism, to which all localities were indifferent, and when Rome ceased to be the centre from whence all legislation flowed, and to which all aspirations were directed, the roots of polytheism were cut away, and, as Lucan says of Pompey, its own weight alone sustained the sapless trunk.*

* Lucan's description of Pompey is so applicable to the state of Roman polytheism, that we cannot forbear quoting the passage from Rowe's imperfect translation:

"Still seem'd he to possess and fill his place,
But stood the shadow of what once he was.
So in the field with Ceres' bounty spread
Uprears some ancient oak his reverend head;
Chaplets and sacred gifts his brows adorn,
And spoils of war by mighty heroes worn.
But, the first vigour of his root now gone,
He stands dependent on his weight alone;

From the moment that Dioclesian revealed his intention of removing the metropolis of the empire to some more eastern country, the rival of Roman polytheism might fairly have calculated on having an ally.

Passing over the Divine origin of Christianity, which comes not within the scope of the present inquiry, we must now examine the history of its growth as a political antagonist to polytheism in the Roman empire. About thirty-three years after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, Nero, according to the common report of historians, set fire to the city of Rome, secretly intending to rebuild it with greater magnificence. Terrified, however, by the burst of popular indignation which such an act of wanton destruction occasioned, he cast his eyes round for an object on which he might conveniently direct the public fury. A new sect is always an object of suspicion, and the Christians therefore naturally presented themselves to his unprincipled mind as precisely the objects he wanted. On them, therefore, the guilt was charged; they were burned as

> All bare his naked branches are display'd,
> And with his leafless trunk he forms a shade;
> Yet though the winds his ruin daily threat,
> As every blast would heave him from his seat;
> Though thousand fairer trees the field supplies,
> That rich in youthful verdure round him rise;
> Fix'd in his ancient state, he yields to none,
> And wears the honours of the grove alone."
>
> Pharsalia, I.

public spectacles of amusement, and the ingenuity displayed in aiding the scenic effect of these horrible exhibitions was more unnatural and inhuman than the most brutal acts of malevolence. The senate and Roman people applauded this persecution, not because they believed one syllable of the imputed charge, but because they were persuaded that the Christians were animated by "hatred of the human race."*

The testimony of Tacitus is express that this persecution was based on the charge of "enmity to the human race," and we cannot long be at a loss to discover the grounds of this odious accusation. Polytheism, as we have shown, was so interwoven with every part of public and domestic life in Rome, that, the moment a man professed himself a Christian, he was inevitably placed in hostility with all the laws, institutions, and customs of his country. Imperial majesty was deified, but the Christian's loyalty could not extend to impious adulation; and, though "he rendered unto Cæsar the things which were Cæsar's," he could not give all which public law and custom entitled the Cæsar to demand,—he could take no part in the public sacrifices periodically offered to ensure the continuance of Roman glory, nor share in the games by which such festivals were celebrated. He thus appeared disloyal to the sovereign personally, and disaffected to the state generally; while at the

* "Odio humani generis convicti."—Tacit. Annal. xv. 44.

same time he was regarded as an enemy to the privileges of the Romans, and the enjoyments of the commons.

It might be said that the Jews at Rome were exposed to the same disadvantages: but the Jews were not a proselyting sect; they were for the most part a poor and despised population, the objects of mockery, but not of fear.* On the other hand, the Christians were animated with a holy zeal to diffuse the blessed religion of the Gospel, and in Rome itself they had made a vast number of converts.† Many of the Christians had adopted the Jewish notion of "the temporal kingdom of Christ," and a still greater number spoke upon the subject in terms which were open to misrepresentation; and they were sure to be misrepresented by influential bodies when their tenets began sensibly to affect the gains of the silversmith, the sculptor, the seller of victims, and the expounder of oracles, and, still more, when they were felt to be subversive of the pontifical honours and exclusive priesthoods which formed the last stronghold of aristocratic privilege in Rome. So far as the Roman empire was a polytheistocracy,—if such a word may be used,—the Christians were of necessity the enemies of its constitution; and they were persecuted, because, in the three first centuries, hostility to Rome was identified with "enmity of the human race."

* Hor. Sat. lib. I., sat. ix. 70.

† "Ingens multitudo."—TACIT., loc. cit.

Under these circumstances the Christians had recourse to secret assemblies, which from the earliest ages had been viewed with suspicion by the Roman government, and frequently proscribed by positive law. This exposed them to a new series of charges, including not merely simple calumnies, but crimes so monstrous that it is difficult to comprehend the credulity by which they could be received and propagated. These atrocious imputations were frequently employed to rouse popular violence against the Christians, but all the persecutions originating with the supreme power were justified on the simple ground that they were the enemies to that religion which was identified with the state. It is not necessary to quote such well-known documents as Pliny's letter to Trajan, and the emperor's reply; but from both it is evident that Christianity was regarded as a species of constructive treason, and hence the imperial edicts minutely describe the nature and amount of evidence which should be sufficient to ensure conviction. This is clearly evident in the only official record of a sentence pronounced against Christians by a proconsul: "Whereas Speratus, Citinus, &c. confess that they are Christians, and *refuse to offer* due homage and respect to the emperor, we ordain that they shall be beheaded."*

* Baronii Annal. Ann. 202.—Vopiscus declares that the ancient Christians spoke of public affairs with a spirit of hardy frankness approaching to daring freedom, which gave great of-

While political motives preponderated in the persecutions to which the Christians were exposed in Western Europe, their sufferings in Greece and Asia were for the most part the result of religious fanaticism. It must, however, be added, that in both divisions of the empire they suffered far more severely from bursts of unauthorized popular violence than from the direct interference of the officers of the state. In consequence of this difference, Christianity spread far more rapidly in the Eastern than in the Western world: neither Greeks, Syrians, nor Egyptians could ever be brought to feel as Romans; they had no respect for the multitude of traditions which had aggregated round the Capitol, and no reverence for the aristocracy which these traditions had invested with the inheritance of political power: they had to support a vague and general polytheism which had little or no hold on their affections, and certainly no direct bearing on their interests; but the Romans had to defend a polytheism on which they fondly believed that their beloved city's claim to the empire of the world was founded.

The reign of Diocletian is the most important epoch in the great struggle between Christianity and polytheism. Deservedly reprobated for his cruel persecution of the Christians, which was

fence in an age pre-eminently characterised by its servile adulation. His words are, "Quibus præsentia semper tempora cum enormi libertate displicent."

probably occasioned by their firm refusal to recognize the titles and attributes of deity which he had blasphemously assumed, this emperor struck the fatal blow from which Roman polytheism never recovered, by removing the seat of government from "the eternal city," and completely destroying the ancient aristocratic constitution of the empire. His object was to establish a system of oriental despotism, and his court at Nicomedia was studiously formed on the model of that of the kings of Persia. The task of destruction was not difficult, for all the ancient elements of the Roman constitution were exhausted; but that of constructing a new system transcended Dioclesian's powers: he felt difficulties increasing rapidly around him; and, conscious of his own inability to restore public order, he abdicated the throne, leaving society to march in full freedom towards the accomplishment of its destinies. Maximian, who had been his colleague, reluctantly followed his example.

On the resignation of the joint emperors, their two inferior colleagues, Constantius and Galerius, who had been designated Cæsars, assumed each the higher title of Augustus; while Galerius, without consulting his colleague, conferred the secondary dignities on Maximin and Severus. Constantius soon after died at York, and was succeeded by his son Constantine, to whom Galerius would

only accord the inferior title and dignity of Cæsar, while he conferred the vacant place of Augustus on his favourite Severus. By this time the senate and Roman people had begun to discover that the transfer of the seat of government from Rome to Milan and Nicomedia was not the mere change of imperial residence, but was part of a new system which threatened all their ancient privileges and advantages with utter annihilation; they, therefore, resolved to elect a sovereign, who, by the place of his residence, and the maxims of his government, should once more deserve the title of a Roman emperor. Their choice fell upon Maxentius, the son of the abdicated Maximian, who was hailed as the protector of the Roman freedom and dignity. Maximian himself, quitting his retirement, resumed the purple at the request of his son; by his superior skill, Severus was soon forced to yield, and only indulged with the privilege of choosing his own mode of execution. Constantine was gained over to the cause of Maxentius by receiving the title of Augustus and the hand of Fausta, Maximian's daughter.

The war which ensued between Maxentius and Galerius was in effect a struggle between the old political system and the new; in consequence, the retreat of the latter was celebrated as the triumph of Roman polytheism: it was said that the legions refused to violate the divine city, which they

regarded as their common parent.* Galerius, soon after his retreat, conferred the title of Augustus both on Licinius and Maximin, so that the Roman empire, for the first and for the last time, was administered by six emperors. Two of them, however, were speedily removed from the scene: Maximian, having been dethroned by his son, sought and found shelter with Constantine, but, revolting against his protector, he was forced to commit suicide; Galerius was seized with a painful and incurable disease, in the paroxysms of which he revoked the persecuting edicts which he had issued against the Christians, and his death was celebrated as the visible effect of Divine vengeance.

Long before any formal division was made, the distinctions between the Eastern and Western empires were distinctly marked; the subjects of both were "aliens to each other in language, religion, and blood." Greek was the language of one, Latin of the other: Eastern heathenism was speculative, and unconnected with any civil institution; Roman polytheism was practical, and pre-eminently political: the Greeks wished to see acts of state emanate direct from the sovereign; the Latins were anxious that nothing should be done without at least the formal intervention of the senate. Though Constantine's provinces formed

* Lactan. de M. P. 28.

part of the Western division of the empire, his judgment and his inclinations rendered him equally unwilling to support the old aristocratic form of government. He was aware that the titles of consul, senate, tribune, &c. were now mere sounds without meaning; and that the maintenance of them served only to encumber the imperial majesty with a multitude of cumbrous forms and annoying checks, inconvenient to the sovereign, and affording no real protection to his subjects. A great portion of his early youth had been spent at the court of Dioclesian, where the old aristocratic forms were viewed with equal contempt and hatred. Constantius Chlorus, the father of Constantine, had been dissociated from the Roman nobility, and the antiquated forms of the republic, during the whole of his honourable career: he appears never to have sought, and he certainly never obtained, a confirmation of his dignity from the senate; and there is not the slightest allusion to their authority in any one of the edicts he issued. Some controversy has been raised respecting his religious opinions; it is, however, sufficient to know that he was not a partisan of Roman polytheism, and that therefore he had no political motive for maintaining the established religion of the empire. He tolerated and protected the Christians to the utmost of his powers, not because he preferred or admired their doctrines, but because

he clearly saw that there was no inconsistency, but on the contrary many points of agreement, between their tenets and his maxims of government.

Every one who has read the writings of the Fathers of the third and fourth centuries must be aware that the Latin Christians regarded Rome, and the aristocratic system associated with that city, as the capital enemies of Christianity. Without entering into any of the controversies which have arisen respecting the interpretation of the Apocalypse, it is an indisputable fact that the early Christians applied all that St. John says of the mystic Babylon to pagan Rome. Indeed, Christians and pagans equally saw that the political supremacy of Rome was indissolubly connected with the maintenance of polytheism; and hence, after the division of the empire, the Christian emperors of the West carefully abstained from restoring to Rome its metropolitan character, and made Milan or Ravenna the place of their residence.

For about fourteen hundred years the pens of controversialists have been exercised in debating the motives which led to the conversion of Constantine; but it never seems to have occurred to them, that the fact of the conversion ought to have been established before any discussion was raised respecting its causes. The fact is, that Constantine did not formally become

a Christian until the very last year of his life,* and hence the favour which he previously accorded to Christianity must be attributed to policy, and not to conviction. Had he persecuted the Christians, he would have played the game of his adversaries, the old Roman aristocracy, which, after it had been stripped of its political influence, rested entirely for support on the old prejudices of polytheism. His rival, Maxentius, afforded him sufficient warning of the weakness

* So much has been said and written of the miraculous vision of Constantine, that it is necessary to take some notice of the evidence on which the alleged miracle is founded. The only direct testimony to the fact is that of Eusebius, who states that he received the information from the emperor himself. But this statement is made in his life of Constantine, which is a panegyric rather than a biography, and therefore to be estimated by the canons of rhetoric, and not those of truth. In fact, Eusebius himself has given pregnant proof that he did not believe the tale, for he makes no mention whatever of the circumstance in his Ecclesiastical History, and it is equally unnoticed in the voluminous writings of the Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries. Weaker affirmative evidence than this could scarcely be exhibited; and, in reply to it, there is as great a weight of accumulated evidence as ever was brought to prove a negative.

The date of the supposed miracle is A.D. 382: now we have coins and inscriptions giving continuous proof that, during the twenty-five years subsequent to that date, Constantine as pontifex maximus officiated in heathen ceremonies, rebuilt heathen temples, erected heathen altars, and displayed heathen symbols on his statues, monuments, and coins. Finally, after his death, he was deified by the Roman senate; and medals were struck in his honour by his sons, on which he appears with the insignia and title of a god. On the other hand, the Christians never

of that aristocracy; though raised to the purple by the senate, he soon found that the names and titles of the old republican nobles and institutions had lost their influence in Italy itself, and were not respected beyond the walls of the capital. Most of the Roman nobles were absentee landlords, and their influence over the occupants of the soil arose from inveterate habits, not from mutual feeling; the weakness of that influence remained unsuspected until the crisis arrived which required it to be tested by actual exertion.* Maxentius had recourse to the præ-

canonized him as a saint, and all the honours paid to his memory came from the pagans.

There is no improbability in the supposition, that Constantine, before his battle with Maxentius, may have had some dream similar in its character to the alleged miraculous vision; and this, in fact, is the account given by Lactantius. There might also have been some appearance in the sky, which the soldiers received as an omen of success, for some of Constantine's *pagan* panegyrists refer to such an occurrence. At the distance of twenty-six years, the fading memory of the emperor may have confounded the dream and the omen. Thus the rejection of the miracle conveys no imputation on the veracity of Constantine, or the honesty of Eusebius; but, in fact, the latter's character is in no way pledged to the truth of the story, which he clearly discredited by refusing it insertion in his Ecclesiastical History.

* "An aristocracy does not expire, like a man, in a single day; the aristocratic principle is slowly undermined in men's opinion before it is attacked in their laws. Long before open war is declared against it, the tie which had hitherto united the higher classes to the lower may be seen to be gradually relaxed. Indifference and contempt are betrayed by one class; jealousy

torian guards, and, when reproached by the nobles for thus deserting their party, he displayed the same implacable aversion to the senate which had characterized the former tyrants of Rome. "The lives of the senators were exposed to his jealous suspicions; the dishonour of their wives and daughters heightened the gratification of his sensual passions. The soldiers were the only order of men whom he appeared to respect or studied to please. He filled Rome and Italy with armed troops, connived at their tumults, suffered them with impunity to plunder and even to massacre the defenceless people, and, indulging them in the same licentiousness which their emperor enjoyed, Maxentius often bestowed on his military favourites the splendid villa or the beautiful wife of a senator."* To point out still more clearly his alienation from the Roman aristocracy, he issued edicts of toleration in favour of the Christians, and even hinted that he had become a convert to their faith.

Maxentius declared war against Constantine, under the pretence of avenging the death of his father. In this contest, the Roman aristocracy

and hatred by the others: the intercourse between rich and poor becomes less frequent and less kind, and rents are raised. This is not the consequence of a democratic revolution, but its certain harbinger; for an aristocracy, which has lost the affection of the people once and for ever, is like a tree dead at the root, which is more easily torn up by the winds, the higher its branches have spread."—M. DE TOQUEVILLE. * Gibbon, chap. xiv.

held the degrading position of neutrality, trusting to chance for making the best terms it could with whichever party might prove victorious. Constantine had been long prepared for the war: with equal courage and wisdom he took the position of the assailant, and, having crossed the Alps, marched direct upon Rome. Susa, at the foot of mount Cenis, was taken by assault; the Italian armies were defeated at Turin and Verona: Maxentius made a last effort to defend his crown on the banks of the Tiber, but his forces were routed with fearful slaughter, and the emperor himself, while attempting to escape into the city over the Milvian bridge, was precipitated into the river, where he was immediately drowned by the weight of his armour. By this victory Constantine became master of the empire of the West. A little afterwards, Licinius became sole emperor of the East by the defeat and death of his rival Maximin.

Neither Constantine nor Licinius were disposed to revive the old constitution, and re-establish the power of the patrician aristocracy. Constantine's first use of his victory was to publish an edict, granting perfect freedom to all religions; and, as Mosheim has justly remarked, the terms which he employs in this ordinance unquestionably prove that he believed in a plurality of gods at the time of its publication.* This edict is, indeed,

* We do not possess Constantine's original edict, but Lactan-

sometimes quoted as a proof of Constantine's conversion, but it was adopted by Licinius, whose attachment to polytheism never wavered; and, at most, it shows that Constantine accorded protection to the adversaries of his enemies, a natural course of policy, which he was not alone in adopting towards the Christians.

Eusebius had endeavoured to represent the war between Constantine and Licinius as a religious struggle, but it was obviously the result of mutual jealousy and of mutual ambition. There were in fact two wars, the first of which was terminated by the cession of some valuable provinces to the emperor of the West, and it was followed by an interval of peace which lasted nearly nine years. During this period we can trace in the edicts of Constantine, if not a growing attachment to Christianity, an increasing and very decided hostility to Roman polytheism. He refused to take part in the Capitoline games; he granted to the Christian clergy the same exemptions from municipal functions which were enjoyed by the heathen pontiffs; he forbade the practice of magic and private divinations; and finally he recognized the observance

tius has preserved the copy which was sent to the præfect of Bithynia by order of Licinius. "Hæc ordinanda esse credidimus," says Constantine, "ut daremus Christianis et omnibus liberam potestatem sequendi religionem quam quisque voluisset, quod quidem *divinitas in sede cælesti* nobis atque omnibus qui sub potestate nostra sunt constituti placatum ac propitium possit existere."—LACTANT. de M. P. 286.

of Sunday as a Christian festival. On the other hand, he instituted the Sarmatic games, unquestionably pagan solemnities, to commemorate his victories in northern Europe.*

The final war between Constantine and Licinius terminated in the defeat and death of the latter, and the whole Roman empire was again united under a single head. This event was followed by what may be regarded as a solemn profession of the emperor's attachment to Christianity, the convocation of the council of Nice, at whose deliberations the emperor assisted in person, although he still held the title and performed some of the functions of a heathen pontiff. It is not very difficult to discover the political motives which induced Constantine to take this remarkable course; Christianity was as yet a religion of faith rather than of form, and it was necessary, or at least it appeared so, that its forms should be definitively settled before it could appear as an established religion. It has been usual to regard the Christian churches as forming, from the beginning, a kind of federative republic, the members of which were governed by a common law, and organized in accordance with common traditions; but a very little inquiry will show that, previous to the assembling of the council of Nice, there was no fixed form of

* "Ludorum celebrationes deorum festa sunt, siquidem ob natales eorum vel templorum novorum dedicationes sunt constituti."—LACT. In. Div. vi. 20.

government in the Christian community,—the different churches were independent of each other,—and that the unity of the Christian body was purely spiritual; they were bound together by common faith, by common feelings, and by common sufferings. Constantine viewed Christianity, not only as a religion, but as "an establishment;" and this for the reason assigned in his celebrated letter to Arius: "I am persuaded that, if I should be sufficiently fortunate to bring all men to honour the same God, such a change of religion would produce a corresponding revolution in the government of the state."* There is no doubt that he was also anxious to put an end to the scandals which the Arian controversy had brought upon Christianity; for the quarrels between Christians were the constant theme of pagan mockery, and afforded abundant food for ridicule to the wits of Rome. On the whole, however, the council of Nice produced its chief influence on the Eastern empire: in the West it was but little regarded, save so far as it afforded a proof that the emperor had definitively separated himself from the cause of polytheism.

The favours which Constantine had shown the Christians were viewed with detestation at Rome; Zozimus relates, that, when he visited the city in the year 326, the people loaded him with injuries and curses, for having abandoned the religion of his ancestors, and promoted with great zeal the worship

* Euseb. Vit. ii. 65.

of an unknown god. Libanius confirms this statement, but adds that he bore the satires and lampoons issued against him with great patience. After a brief residence he left the city, with a firm resolution never to return; and, soon after, seriously commenced the work which he had long contemplated, the foundation of a new metropolis for the Roman empire.* The transfer of the seat of government from Rome to some more Eastern city was not, as some have represented, a hasty resolution, adopted in a moment of resentment: it was a plan framed by Dioclesian, and partially acted upon long before; and it was, in fact, rendered absolutely necessary for the preservation of the empire by the rapid growth of the Persian power. It is, however, not improbable that Constantine's removal to the shores of the Bosphorus was accelerated by his dissatisfaction at the state of things on the banks of the Tiber; he could not avoid seeing that his proceedings were condemned, and his power secretly assailed by the Roman aristocracy and their partisans in the Western provinces. It is true that an edict, granting perfect freedom of religion, was very far from a legal establishment of Christianity, but it was what the patricians justly

* In the interval between the departure of the emperor from Rome and the foundation of Constantinople, he put to death his gallant son Crispus, his wife Fausta, and his nephew Licinius: the causes that impelled him to commit these crimes are left in obscurity by contemporary writers, and have scarcely been penetrated by subsequent historians.

regarded as equally fatal to their own interests, a legal disestablishment of Roman polytheism; it recognized the existence of a magistracy without auspices, auguries, or sacrifices, and, consequently, a magistracy completely dissevered from patrician influence. We have already seen that Constantine had declared in his letter to Arius that the recognition of Christianity necessarily involved a new constitution and a new system of government for the state; and we shall soon see that it was accompanied by the final consummation of the great revolution, which rendered the Roman empire a military, or rather an Oriental despotism, instead of an aristocratic monarchy.

The great advantage which Christianity gained from the transfer of the seat of government to Constantinople was, that the new city had no heathen traditions and no patriotic reminiscences. Those pagans who came to settle in it were, for the first time, compelled to contemplate idolatry separated from all the endearing associations which had previously veiled its grossness. Some of the ceremonies which were used at the dedication of the city had undoubtedly a pagan character, but the idol displayed was "the genius of the emperor," which might be an object of temporary adulation, but could never have attracted a permanent reverence.

The Christians throughout the empire hailed Constantinople as their metropolis, while they regarded

Rome as the capital of the heathen opposition; they boasted that the ancient gods had been brought in chains to the new city, and they pointed in triumph to the churches and crosses erected to adorn its squares and public places. This was the decisive triumph of Christianity in the Eastern empire: it was afterwards exposed to serious dangers from dissensions in the church, from heresies, and, for a brief space, from philosophic theism; but pagan idolatry, in Greece and Western Asia, was overthrown for ever.

During the remaining fourteen years of his life Constantine's attachment to Christianity became continually more marked, and his boons to the Christian clergy and churches more lavish. He held conferences with the bishops, he was present at their homilies, he presided at their councils, and he exhibited a lively interest in the controversies which divided the Eastern churches. But he did not employ the imperial power to make compulsory proselytes; the Western provinces were administered by governors, who, for the most part, observed all the forms of the pagan ritual; and the supporters of polytheism, freed from the controlling presence of the supreme power, so fortified themselves in Rome that the city long remained uninhabitable for the Christian emperors. The Theodosian code contains many signal proofs that, while the emperor favoured Christianity in the Eastern empire, he deemed it politic to protect polytheism

in the Western provinces. In the very year (A. D. 335) that Constantine assembled the councils of Tyre and Jerusalem to settle the differences of the Christian church, he issued an edict relieving the heathen flamens and priests of Africa from certain municipal duties which had been imposed upon them by the provincial governors. Thus, while Christianity became the established religion of the Eastern empire, we find polytheism maintaining its ascendancy in Western Europe: in Constantinople, the victory of religion was won ere the contest had fairly commenced in Italy.

The very different views which have been taken of the religious policy of Constantine have arisen from a want of carefully distinguishing between the Eastern provinces, in which his administration was unchecked, and his Western dominions, where his course was checked by old constitutional precedents, and impeded by the only classes which he could employ to work the machinery of his government. While the ascendancy of the Christian church was established in one portion of the Roman dominions, the legal toleration of its existence was the utmost that could be obtained in the other. All difficulties are removed by recognizing in Constantine two distinct characters, that of an emperor of the East and that of an emperor of the West; the former being Christian from choice, the latter being pagan, or at least indifferent, from necessity. When Constantine declared himself in favour of Christianity,

nearly the entire Western empire was opposed to the new faith; the Roman senate and nobility, all the trading corporations, the municipal magistracies of the other cities, the great bulk of the civil and military authorities, were all devoted to polytheism; and the Christians, living for the most part unknown and concealed in the towns, did not amount to one twelfth, and probably not to one twentieth, of the entire population. Fanaticism itself would have been daunted from entering on a contest with such perilous odds; but Constantine was no fanatic, indeed to the last he was not a very zealous Christian. The closing years of his life were spent in indolent luxury, which not unfrequently degenerated into scandalous debauchery; and neither he, nor the Eastern bishops by whom he was surrounded, appear to have bestowed the slightest attention on Western Christianity. It is not necessary to enter on any consideration of the personal vices imputed to the first Christian emperor; as in the analogous case of Henry VIII. and the British Reformation, we must regard him as an instrument who unconsciously worked out the great designs of Providence, while he only sought the gratification of his own selfish purposes. He certainly dealt a fatal blow to Roman polytheism, from which it never recovered; but he sought at the time freedom from aristocratic restraints, and not the advancement of any religious object.

The atrocious massacre of Constantine's brother,

his nephews, and his ministers, almost before his body was cold, belongs properly to Byzantine history; and of his three sons, among whom his dominions were divided, Constans, who after a short struggle obtained the Western empire, must first engage our attention. Constans was an ardent supporter of orthodox Christianity, and a bitter enemy of the Arians; but, nevertheless, we find that he respected polytheism as the dominant religion in his portion of the empire, for we find him issuing a very severe edict against the demolition of sepulchres, and making provision for the preservation of the pagan temples in the vicinity of Rome.* Constans was murdered by Magnentius, and, after the overthrow of the usurper, the whole Roman empire was again re-united under Constantius. He, like his father and brother, felt himself constrained to respect the predominance of polytheism in the Western provinces: Symmachus, whose virtues rendered his attachment to idolatry pardonable, and the religion itself respectable, says of this emperor, "He did not deprive the sacred (vestal) virgins of any of their privileges; he conferred sacerdotal dignities on the nobles, and made provision for the expense of the Roman ceremonies."† The only exception to this course of policy was his order that the altar of Victory should be removed from the senate-house; but it was so soon replaced by his successor Julian, that the circumstance produced little effect

* Cod. Theod. l. 16, t. 10, l. 3. † Sym. lib. x. ep. 54.

on the minds of the Romans, and long after his death, in spite of the weakness and vices of his character, they spoke of Constantius with affection and respect, as one who not only tolerated but protected the ancient religion of the eternal city.

Julian, stigmatized by history as the Apostate, was raised to the empire by the pagans of the West, at a period when the support which Constantius gave to Arianism had alienated from him the great body of the Christians of the East. The death of Constantius averted the horrors of civil war, but any hopes which the Latins may have formed of the restoration of their old system by Julian were shown to be unfounded by the very first proceedings of the new emperor. Julian was a bitter enemy of Christianity, but not on account of its hostility to Roman polytheism, in which he to a great extent concurred; he hated it as the successful rival of Grecian philosophy. This emperor has been as absurdly calumniated by the ecclesiastical historians as he has been extravagantly eulogized by the sceptical writers. A pedant and a sophist, rather than a scholar and a philosopher, he never comprehended the political considerations involved in the restoration of the ascendancy of paganism. His writings prove that his religious notions were vague and indefinite, while contemporary heathen writers describe him as addicted to magic* and the vulgar

* "Superstitiosus magis, quam sacrorum legitimus observator." —AMMIAN. MAR. XXV. 4.

superstitions of paganism. The edict which he published against Christian education was designed to promote the schools of the Sophists, and not to confer any advantage on pontifical colleges; though resisted by the Christians as an injury, it was not received by the heathen as a boon. In the Western empire his proceedings were viewed with supreme indifference, for his avowed purpose was to promote Hellenism, a system just as odious to the Romans as Christianity itself, and which assuredly would not have been less fatal to the peculiar system of polytheism which their passions and interests required them to uphold. It has been said with some justice, that the Eastern Christians were more frightened than hurt by Julian's rash hostility; it may be added, that to the Western churches his edicts occasioned neither terror nor danger. Julian fell in the Persian war, and his death was scarcely less regretted by the majority of his Christian subjects than by the pagans themselves. His memory, however, was severely assailed by the clergy, in whose eyes his greatest crime was that he had banished them from the imperial court, where they had long exercised a preponderating influence. The results of his reign were on the whole favourable to Christianity in the West; the contempt which an emperor, hailed as the restorer of the old religion, evinced for the entire system of Roman polytheism, and his avowed intention to set up a third rival

against it, showed that its fate was sealed, and that its final overthrow was merely a question of time.

Intelligence of the election of Jovian, and of that emperor's death, reached Italy nearly at the same time; but neither event appears to have excited any attention. The Roman senate made no effort whatever to regain its former influence in the election of a sovereign, and nobody appears to have ever thought of consulting its pleasure in the matter. Valentinian was saluted emperor by the legions; a circumstance which seems to prove that Christianity had made considerable progress in the armies of the East, as Valentinian had been disgraced by Julian for having openly scoffed at the pagan rites.* But, though his zeal was thus ardent, there has rarely been a sovereign who better comprehended, and more firmly maintained, the principles of religious equality and freedom.† He restored to the pagan pontiffs the privileges and precedency of which they had been deprived ever since the reign of Alexander Severus; a boon which they could not have expected from Julian himself, all whose favours were reserved for philosophers. It has been said

* He struck a priest who sprinkled him with lustral water as he accompanied Julian to the temple of Fortune.—SOZOMEN, vi. 6.

† "Hoc moderamine principatus inclaruit, quod inter religionum diversitates medius stetit."—AMMIAN. MARCELL. XXX. 9.

by some writers that he prohibited sacrifices; but they mistook the laws against private divination, magic, and astrology, which were, in fact, but the revival of edicts issued by the ancient heathen emperors, for prohibitions of pagan worship generally. Having appointed his brother Valens his colleague, and assigned to him the government of the Eastern provinces, Valentinian took upon himself the administration of the Western empire, and made Milan his principal residence.

The Romans must have felt severely mortified when they saw a rival metropolis established in Italy; and the influence of the national religion, which was essentially connected with the supremacy of "the eternal city," was more fatally weakened by the rivalry of Milan than of Constantinople itself. The declining power of polytheism in the city of Rome was shown by the sudden increase of magical delusions, which were both credited and practised by many persons of the highest rank.* A charge of practising these illegal arts was brought before Maximin, who held the office of prefect at Rome: he wrote to the emperor that sorcery had spread extensively through every rank of society, and asked for permission to establish

* "Magic," says Benjamin Constant, "may be called the Fetichism of civilized life. Fetichism is the effort of man to discover the Divinity when he has no direct means of acquiring the idea; magic is the effort of man to discover this idea when it has been lost."—Du Polythéisme Rom. ii. 113.

an inquisitorial tribunal in order to arrest the progress of the evil. A fearful persecution, founded on this pretext, decimated the ranks of the Roman nobility; persons of the highest rank were tortured on the rack, scourged like slaves, and delivered to the executioner. At length the senate made a solemn appeal to the emperor, who directed the prosecutions to be suspended. Christians as well as pagans were involved in the charge of magic, but the latter were far the most influenced by the delusion, and its prevalence at this period may be regarded as a proof of the declining influence of polytheism.

Roman polytheism, however, still retained all the external circumstances of its ancient splendour. A contemporary writer * enumerates one hundred and fifty-two temples dedicated to the worship of different deities in the fourteen regions into which the city was divided, besides one hundred and eighty-three chapels † dedicated to the tutelary deities of private families. The Capitol still exhibited its crowds of priests, its numerous sacrifices, and its gorgeous ceremonials. ‡ The deified Rome was worshipped there with a mixture of memory and hope, and a lingering belief that eternity of empire was still the destiny

* Publius Victor. † Ædiculæ.

‡ "Capitolium, ubi simulacra omnium deorum celebrantur." —Publius Victor, 1160.

of the city.* But faith in the ancient religion was for ever destroyed; and the Christians, even of the West, might fairly adopt the question put by George, bishop of Alexandria, "How long will these sepulchres be permitted to remain?" †

* "Capitolium, quo se venerabilis Roma in æternum attollit." —AMMIAN. MARCELL. xxii. 16.

† Ammian. Marcell. xxii. 11.

CHAPTER II.

The overthrow of Paganism and establishment of Christianity in the Western Empire.—Second Epoch: The struggle of Christianity for ascendancy.

In the age of Valentinian, the converts to Christianity in the Western empire consisted chiefly of the middle classes in the towns. The agricultural population still adhered to the traditions and superstitions of their ancestors, with such tenacity that the word "Pagans," which literally signifies the inhabitants of rural districts, became a generic name for all classes of idolaters. In the higher ranks, the Christians were chiefly found among the officers of state and the ministers of the imperial court, who were for the most part unconnected with the patrician body, and owed their elevation either to their military services or to imperial favour. The old patrician families, who affected to trace their descent to the great aristocratic houses of the ancient republic, the "Gentiles"* as they loved to call themselves, adhered to

* "Gentile" properly signifies a man of ancient family, from "Gens:" the Latin Fathers, however, rather inaccurately employed it as the translation of the Hebrew גוי and the Greek Εθνικος,

polytheism, which now alone afforded any external evidence of their hereditary rank; and hence "gentile-man," or "gentle-man," came to be used indifferently for a man of exalted birth or polished manners, and for one who rejected the truths of Christianity.

Gratian, on whom his father had conferred the imperial title in his childhood, succeeded to the supreme government when only sixteen years of age. The legions of Gaul compelled him to nominate as his associate his brother Valentinian II.; but soon afterwards, on the death of Valens, he chose a more worthy colleague, the great Theodosius, to whom he entrusted the empire of the East. Immediately after his accession, Gratian issued an edict, establishing anew the equality of religions; and, during the earlier years of his reign, he exhibited a perfect indifference to churches and temples, or rather a preference for so much of the pagan system as tended to exalt the imperial majesty. At this period St. Ambrose held the see of Milan; he belonged to one of the few families of rank that had yet embraced the new religion;* his birth and dignity equally tended to give him influence in the imperial court, and his distinguished abilities united with his winning manners to procure him the entire confidence of the emperor. Though

both of which signify a person belonging to any other nation than that of the Jews.

* His father had been prætorian prefect in the reign of Constantine.

the sovereigns were Christians, the religion of the state, at least in its outward forms, was still polytheism; the pagan solemnities were called "national games," the pontiffs sacrificed "in the name of the whole human race," and the senate deliberated in the presence of the tutelary deity of Rome. St. Ambrose comprehended all the advantages which polytheism derived from the preservation of these forms, and instigated Gratian to make a change, which had the advantage of appearing to be a legitimate consequence of the establishment of the principle of religious freedom. The first measure announcing the emperor's change of policy was so trifling in appearance, but of such vast importance in reality, that it will be necessary to preface the account with a few words of explanation.

In the Julian Curia,* the usual place for the assembly of the senate, an altar had been erected to Victory, surmounted by a statue of the goddess, which was regarded as the palladium of the empire.† This statue had formerly belonged to the Tarentines, and, when removed to Rome, it was deemed so sacred that Augustus decorated it with the most precious of the ornaments he had obtained from the conquest of Egypt. At

* Claud. II. Cons. Stil. v. 206: it was originally the Curia Hostilia, but, having been burned down, it was rebuilt by Augustus, who gave it a new name, in honour of Julius Cæsar.

† "Custos imperii virgo."—CLAUD. loc. cit.

the opening of their sittings it was customary for the senators to burn a few grains of incense on this altar, and to renew their vows of fidelity to the state and the emperor. In the age of Gratian a few Christians had found their way into the senate; they began to complain, and not without some show of justice, that they were forced either to abandon their duties, or to take a part in deliberations conducted under the sanction of idolatry. They besought Gratian to relieve them from this constraint upon their consciences, and to act upon the precedent set by Constantius, who had for a brief season removed the idolatrous symbol. The pagan majority instinctively saw the results that would follow from a compliance with this request; they felt that the senate would be deprived of its character as a religious institution, which it had held from its first establishment, and, consequently, that the last source of its political importance would be swept away. Protests and petitions were in vain addressed to the emperor; the fatal order was given; and though the image was for a time restored to its place by the usurper Eugenius, at a later period, this only served to render its final expulsion more marked and more ignominious.*

The emperor next seized upon the estates with

* The appeals of Symmachus to Valentinian II. for the restoration of this image, and the clever replies of St. Ambrose, are among the most interesting literary remains of the fourth century.

which the temples had been endowed, and ordered that the revenues, hitherto applied to the support of the priests and the purchases of victims, should be paid into the exchequer.* This edict, however, was probably limited to those temples which had been nearly or altogether abandoned by worshippers; for a subsequent law, which forbade pontiffs to receive legacies of real estate, secured to them bequests of personal property.† A still more severe measure was the revocation of all the political and civil privileges which, from time immemorial, had been conceded to the Roman priesthood; the Vestal virgins themselves, so long the sacred guardians of the glory and safety of Rome, were despoiled of all the legal marks of respect which they had enjoyed from ages before the foundation of the city.‡

The alarmed senate hastened to arrest the emperor's course by offering to him the dignity of supreme pontiff, which would have rendered him the official head of polytheism; and an illustrious deputation waited upon him in Gaul, to present him with the pontifical robes. Gratian positively refused to accept them; he declared that such ornaments were unsuitable to a Christian.§ This was a blow equally heavy and unexpected; the empire had no longer a supreme pontiff, the aristocratic hierarchy was

* Cod. Theod. lib. xvi. t. 10.
† Id. loc. cit.
‡ Symmach. x. 54.
§ Zosim. iv. 36.

left without a head: the disruption of the alliance between polytheism and the state was publicly proclaimed, and a new constitution of society was rendered inevitable. The revolt of Maximus put an end to the progress of change; Gratian, abandoned by his soldiers, was captured and slain: the usurper became master of the provinces north of the Alps; but Italy, Illyricum, and Africa acknowledged the authority of young Valentinian. The senate appealed to this youthful prince to repeal the edicts of Gratian; his refusal so alienated the Romans, that Maximus was induced to invade Italy, and Valentinian II. with difficulty escaped to the court of Theodosius. The great emperor of the East immediately took up arms in aid of the fugitive; Maximus was slain, and Valentinian obtained possession of the entire Western empire. He did not long enjoy his acquisitions, having been assassinated at the instigation of a Frank named Arbogastes, who had been long his principal minister. The Italians eagerly embraced this opportunity for restoring the ascendancy of Rome and Roman polytheism; they elected Eugenius, one of the imperial secretaries, to the purple, and obtained from him the repeal of the obnoxious laws of Gratian. But this was only a temporary triumph; Theodosius, having forced the passes of the Alps, defeated Eugenius and put him to death. All the West submitted to the conqueror, and, for

the last time, the Roman empire was reunited under a single head.

Theodosius conferred the empire of the West on his son Honorius, one of whose earliest acts was to carry out the edicts for the confiscation of heathen endowments issued by Gratian. The property of the temples was plundered; Serena, the wife of the imperial minister, Stilicho, took a rich necklace from the statue of Cybele with her own hands, and wore the stolen ornament in public;* the most valuable of the lands were seized for the use of the prince, and some domains were assigned for the support of Christian churches. Several powerful nobles, without waiting for the imperial sanction, seized on the properties belonging to the temples in their neighbourhood,† and thenceforward became not less remarkable for their attachment to Christianity than they had previously been for their support of polytheism. But, though the pagan priesthood was deprived of all political influence, yet sacerdotal titles were so highly valued by society, that we find not only pagans, but Christians, becoming candidates for the guardianship of temples and the honorary designations connected with such a charge.‡ Another proof of the strength of

* Zosimus, v. 38.—The historian, who was a bigoted pagan, adds, that an old woman who was present cursed Serena; and he attributes all her subsequent misfortunes to this sacrilege.

† Cod. Theod. v. 257. ‡ Cod. Theod. l. xii. t. 1, l. 112.

polytheism even in its decline, was the necessity of issuing edicts against apostacy. Theodosius enacted several laws to put an end to the increasing scandal of persons professing Christianity at one time, and polytheism at another, as best suited their interests; he proclaimed that those who relapsed into idolatry should be incapable of making a will or receiving a legacy.* At length, eight years after Theodosius had proclaimed perfect freedom of religion, a memorable edict was published in the Eastern and Western empires (February 27, A. D. 391) prohibiting sacrifices and every other form of idolatrous worship.† This edict was frequently renewed, and at every repetition more severe penalties were annexed to the transgression In Egypt, and Western Asia, the Christians, instigated by the monks, and in some few cases by the secular clergy, rose tumultuously, and destroyed several magnificent temples without any legal authority. Theodosius did not encourage these scandalous scenes, but he took no effectual measures for their prevention. It deserves to be incidentally noticed, that the pagans of Palestine applied to the Jews for aid in defence of their temples, and that the children of Abraham enabled them to save from ruin the temples of Raphia, Gaza, and Hieropolis.‡ In the greater part of the Western empire, however, the

* Cod. Theod. l. xvi. t. 7, l. 4. † Id. l. 10.

‡ St. Jerome, iv. 591.

laws against idolatry were a dead letter; not only was public opinion unfavourable to their execution, but the great majority of the municipal authorities were adherents of the old religion. The strength of municipal institutions in the Western cities, and their utter weakness in the East, was one of the most marked differences between the constitutions of the two empires; and in all ages municipalities have been found the greatest obstacle both to political and to religious revolutions.* .

After the death of Theodosius, the empire was divided between his two sons; Arcadius inheriting the East, and Honorius the West. The separation of the two empires was now consummated, and henceforth the history of the Byzantines ceases to have any connection with that of the Romans. St. Augustine, in a few words, has written the history of the reign of Honorius: "Wars, wars, nothing but wars! Wars between nations for empire; between sects, Jews, pagans, Christians, heretics.—Wars, still wars! They are everywhere multiplied; battles are fought for truth, and battles are fought for error."† During this epoch the strife between creeds, and between nations, was equally violent and decisive; at its close the Roman empire lost at once the last traces of its

* "Every corporation is essentially conservative." — LORD BROUGHAM.

† St. Aug. tom. v. p. 272.

power, and of its ancient political and religious institutions.

Stilicho, to whom the guardianship of the young emperor was entrusted, though himself a Christian, was too well aware of the political strength of polytheism in Italy, to adopt any violent measures for the suppression of idolatry.* The Romans had not yet abandoned all hope of restoring their ancient religion; they circulated a report that St. Peter had employed magical spells to procure the adoration of Christ for the space of three hundred and sixty-five years, at the end of which time all the world would return back to its former gods.† But, as the influence of Stilicho declined, Honorius began to adopt harsher measures, and at the close of the fourth century an edict was issued abolishing the public rites and private sacrifices of polytheism; but the emperor had neither the firmness nor the power to enforce this law, and the destruction of idolatry was reserved for those who had no reverence for the name of Rome, no respect for its traditions, and no interest in preserving any of its ancient institutions.

* It is but justice to state, that St. Augustine approved this cautious policy, and exhorted those who wished to see a greater manifestation of zeal for the suppression of idolatry to remember that the statues, altars, and furniture of the temples should be respected as private property.—Tom. x. p. 10.

† Augustin. de Civ. Dei, viii. 53.

The fifth century opened with the invasion of Italy by the Goths; the Arian Alaric, and the pagan Radagaisus, were both defeated by the abilities of Stilicho, but the Romans evinced no gratitude for their preservation; they could never pardon him for having plundered the sacred treasures of the Capitol and commanded the destruction of the Sibylline books, which they had regarded as a pledge of the eternity of their empire.* On the other hand, the Christians with some justice suspected him of double-dealing, as he had allowed his son Eucher to become an avowed patron of polytheism.† Honorius was at the same time alarmed by the general report that Stilicho intended to make Eucher his successor in the empire. There were few contemporaries who blamed the emperor for putting Stilicho and Eucher to death, but all subsequent writers concur in opinion that this was the proximate cause of the ruin which soon came upon Italy.

Olympius, the successor of Stilicho, induced Honorius to renew the law prohibiting the heathen ritual both in public and private, but at the same time commanding that the temples should be preserved as public buildings for the use of the state.‡

* "Æterni fatalia pignora regni."—Rut. Num.

† "Qui (i. e. Eucher), ad conciliandum sibi favorem paganorum, restitutione templorum et eversione ecclesiarum, imbuturum se regni primordia minabatur."—Oros. vii. 38.

‡ Cod. Theod. l. xvi. t. 10. l. 19.

This law, which was generally disobeyed, was followed by another, excluding all enemies of the Catholic communion from the imperial court; but so many officers of the army were attached to polytheism that this edict was soon revoked.* Alaric again invaded Italy; the wretched Honorius, believing himself safe in Ravenna, abandoned the rest of the peninsula to the invaders, whose anger he provoked by deceitful and perfidious negociations. The Romans, encouraged by Alaric, resolved to elect a new emperor; they chose Priscus Attalus, who at once revived all the political and religious institutions of polytheism.† Extravagant joy filled the city; all their calamities had been attributed to the disuse of their ancient sacred rites; and, now that these were revived, they not only flattered themselves with the hope of speedy deliverance from the barbarians, but imagined that they were about to recover their ancient empire over Egypt and the East.‡ But such a delusion could not last long; Heraclianus, the governor of Africa, forbade the exportation of corn to Italy; and the Romans, who had depended on this province for supplying provision, were soon reduced to

* Zosimus, v. 46.—Even in the Eastern empire the heathens were occasionally admitted to the highest offices; Optatius, who was a bitter opponent of Christianity, held the office of governor of Constantinople in the year 404.

† Oros. vii. 42.

‡ Sozomen, ix. 8.

the most shocking extremities of famine. This, it may be remarked, is one of the numerous instances which history affords of the impolicy of relying exclusively on colonies, and sacrificing for them a free and general trade with all producing countries. Attalus, who had adopted the narrow views of colonial policy along with the other errors of the ancient emperors, would not consent that Alaric should undertake the conquest of Africa; and the Gothic monarch, weary alike of his folly and his ingratitude, unceremoniously deprived him of empire, and sent the ensigns of his dignity to Honorius. Thus terminated a brief and inglorious reign, and thus speedily were the vain hopes and illusions of the pagan party dissipated. Honorius veiled the scandal by a general amnesty; the partisans of polytheism sunk abashed into retirement, and matters resumed their natural course. It is evident that the pagan aristocracy must have wanted leaders of character, talent, and even common sense, or else they never could have looked for the revival of their ancient political polytheism from an alliance with a Goth and an Arian.

The storming and plunder of Rome has been described by so many historians that its painful details must be familiar to most readers. In the preceding century, Lactantius, in a spirit of prophecy, had anticipated this event, and at the same time had shown, that, like all Romans, he believed

the ruin of the city to be the signal for that of the world.* "Can any one," says he, "doubt, that, when the head of the world will be struck, as the predictions of the Sibyls† have shown that it is fated to be, all human affairs, and the earth itself, will feel the effects of the blow? In fact, it is by that city that all things are now sustained. Let us supplicate and entreat the God of Heaven, if ever His decrees are suspended, that the abominable tyrant destined to commit this monstrous crime and quench the light, the extinction of which will bring ruin on the world, may not appear sooner than we expect him."‡ The sack of Rome was the triumph of barbarism over civilization; Christians and pagans fell equally beneath the merciless swords of the Goths. But this great event indirectly decided the question of religious ascendancy; for it overthrew the foundations on which the reverence for the patrician aristocracy rested, by affording indisputable proof that the nobility was no longer capable of supporting the glory, the interests, or the institutions of Rome. Already deprived of their estates in the provinces, and now stripped of their personal property, the senators,

* In one sense this belief was well founded, for the ruin of Rome consummated the ruin of the political system by which the world had been governed during the period of Roman ascendancy.

† Most of the ancient Fathers, as well as Lactantius, regarded the Sibyls as divinely inspired prophetesses.

‡ Lactant. In Div. vii. 25.

instead of being respected as protectors, were, at best, only commiserated as fellow-sufferers. Numbers, unable to bear the mortifications which such a change of fortunes entailed, emigrated to foreign lands; the few who remained abandoned all care of the government. Every vestige of the old republican institutions was swept away, and Roman polytheism was left without a priesthood. It is not surprising that the Christian Fathers compared this great and sudden overthrow to the destruction of Babylon and Sodom.*

Not only the pagans, but some of the Christians themselves, attributed this calamity to the new religion; † they reproached its professors with the promises of felicity in the Gospel, and their blasphemous imprecations against the very name of Christ were carried to the wildest excess of extravagance. Alaric was almost forgotten; even before he was removed by death, and the entire blame of his ravages was thrown upon Christianity. A simple cause may be assigned for this perversion of facts; the traces of its ruin remained imprinted on paganism, while Christianity rapidly retrieved its losses. A Christian church, when destroyed, was sure to be rebuilt when the invaders retired;

* St. August. de Excid. Urbis, passim. — Paul Orosius went farther: he said that God conducted Innocent I., bishop of Rome, to Ravenna, as Lot had formerly been led from Sodom to Zoar, that he might be spared the pain of witnessing the destruction of a sinful city.—Oros. vii. 38.

† Salv. 138.

but a heathen temple never rose again from its ruins. The rebuilding of the city by Honorius was thus a new injury to polytheism; its deserted temples were unfavourably contrasted with the splendour of the churches, and the outward show of magnificence which had veiled the decadence of paganism was lost for ever. Christianity had thus passed through the second stage of its political struggle; it had first gained equality, and now it had established its ascendancy. During the remainder of the reign of the feeble Honorius, the Christians were engaged in quietly securing their acquisitions, and preparing for the final contest which was to end in the utter extinction of paganism.

Before entering on this portion of the history, it will be necessary to cast a glance at the changes wrought in the constitution of the Christian church, or in Christianity viewed as a political system, during the arduous struggle which terminated in its decisive triumph. This inquiry is quite independent of the history of Christianity as a creed or opinion, and it will not, therefore, throw much light on the most important relation that the religion of the Gospel bears to mankind, "as a rule of life intended to influence both individuals and nations, gradually to operate upon laws, customs, and institutions and manners, and gradually to cheer and bless all the sons of men."* But when Constantine recognized the Christian clergy as a body

* Rose's Second Divinity Lecture, delivered at Durham.

deserving the patronage of the state—when he invested ecclesiastics with political privileges and immunities—when he gave them the power of inheriting and holding property in trust for the support of churches—when he sanctioned the convocation of councils for the purpose of deciding controversies of doctrine and establishing rules of discipline, Christianity became, not only a religious, but a political system, and as such may be fairly investigated without any reference to its theology.

It has been justly said, that the earliest Christian churches were precisely similar in constitution to the Jewish synagogues. The synagogue was governed by a consistory of elders, under the superintendency of a president, whose title and office corresponded to that of the early Christian bishop:* it was his duty to order all matters relative to the synagogue and its services; to license "the angel," or minister, who offered up prayers for the congregation; and the "chazan," or reader, who read and sometimes expounded the appointed portions of Scripture. Every synagogue, so far as internal government was concerned, was a republic in itself, but each tacitly acknowledged the superior sanctity of the congregation which met at Jerusalem under the presidency of the high-priest; and that pontiff was the centre of their unity, inasmuch as he offered the sacrifices of propitiation and atonement enjoined by the Mosaic law. We

* See Lightfoot on Matt. ix.

learn, from the Epistle to the Hebrews, the precise difference between the ecclesiastical constitution of the Jewish synagogue and the Christian church in the apostolic age: it was simply this,—the bond of Jewish unity was a Levitical high-priest who offered daily sacrifices; the bond of Christian unity was "an high-priest after the order of Melchisedec, whose sacrifice of himself—an offering once for all—'perfected for ever them that are sanctified.'" In other words, the principle of Jewish unity was visible and material, that of Christian unity was invisible and spiritual; and so it continued to be until Christianity became a temporality, and was, in consequence, obliged to make provision for temporal government.

The intercourse between the distinct Christian churches was more frequent and continuous than that between the Jewish synagogues: in seasons of famine, or distress, one congregation freely communicated relief to another; and those who fled from persecution in the West, were, on producing their certificates of communion, hospitably entertained by the churches of the East. Impostors frequently abused these pious institutions of Christian charity,* and the necessity for caution and inquiry led to an active correspondence between remote churches. Community of danger frequently compelled the churches established in

* Lucian in Morte Peregrini.

the same province to concert measures for mutual protection; and, when they were numerous, it is obvious that such consultations could only be held by delegates, and we may easily believe that on such occasions the delegates selected would be the most influential persons in the several churches, that is, in most cases, the bishops or presidents of consistories.* It was this well-known usage which suggested to Constantine the convocation of the council of Nice; and it was from this council that the present episcopal constitution of the Eastern and Western churches was derived. The history of this council has never been written; we know not where the bishops assembled, how often they met, who presided at their sittings, or the nature and amount of the share which Constantine took in their deliberations. We only know that this assembly assumed to itself the representative character of the entire Christian body, for the first time designated as the Catholic church; and that, in this parliamentary capacity, it enacted creeds and canons which were declared to be binding on all communities of Christians. Many eminent writers, and, amongst others, the Archbishop of Dublin, hold that the prelates at Nice exceeded their powers

* Theodoret distinctly affirms that there was no difference between the bishop and presbyter in the apostolic age: *επισκοπους τους πρεσβυτερους καλει, αμφοτερα γαρ ειχον κατ' εκεινον τον καιρον τα ονοματα.*—THEOD. ad Phil. i. 1.

by thus assuming a legislative authority over independent churches; but, without entering into this discussion, we may without any fear of controversy say, that the council changed the character of episcopacy by superadding to its spiritual duties political and magisterial functions.

Many circumstances contributed to impress episcopacy more and more with a temporal character. The firm adherence of the old Roman aristocracy, and of a very large proportion of the most influential families in the Eastern empire, to polytheism, rendered it difficult for the Christian emperors to provide governors for the provinces, and prefects for the cities, in whom they could place entire confidence; hence they were frequently obliged to look to the bishops for aid in the civil administration of the empire, and thus prelates, in spite of themselves, were forced to become politicians. When equality of religious worship was established, the heathen governors, especially in remote provinces, were slow in yielding obedience to edicts which granted favours to the enemies of their faith: the Christians, who suffered under the old persecuting laws, naturally complained to their spiritual father, who of course felt it his duty to make an appeal either to the local or supreme government, and in most cases to both. This was a second source of infusing a political character into Christian episcopacy, and the history of the churches in Northern Africa contains abundant evidence that the inter-

ference of the bishops was equally beneficial and unavoidable.*

The change in the character of the Christian system of episcopacy, which we have just described, has been most unfairly attributed to ambition, and other worldly motives, in the bishops themselves; but the circumstances above stated show that political power was to a great extent forced upon them by unavoidable necessity. In Western Europe their case is still stronger: Christianity and polytheism in Italy were engaged in a struggle for life and death; the political system of the Roman aristocracy required the utter extermination of a religion which threatened to deprive them of all their sacerdotal privileges by annihilating the priesthood to which they belonged; the Christian prelates could not avoid becoming the political enemies of the pagan senate, and advocates for the absolute despotism of a Christian emperor. To act

* "Great and beneficial was the influence exercised by the bishops in the various relations of social life. The pagan severity and cruelty, which had mingled themselves with so many laws of the empire, were by them greatly softened, and Christian principles substituted in their place. They watched that slaves might not be treated with barbarity by their masters; that exposed children might not be reduced to slavery; they visited and comforted the accused and condemned in their prisons. The emancipation of slaves, according to a law of Constantine, could take place in the church and before the bishops for slighter and more simple causes than had before been admitted, and ecclesiastics could liberate their own slaves without any formality."—DOLLINGER, ii. 311.

otherwise would have been nothing better than a tacit consent to the abolition of that religion which they had undertaken to defend. St. Ambrose was the first who thoroughly comprehended the nature of an Italian prelate's position, between the imperial majesty on the one hand, and the old Roman aristocracy on the other; he saw the church menaced with slavery by the one, and ruin by the other, and he comprehended that under those circumstances it was necessary for the church to have a political existence independent of both. Some Protestant writers have censured him severely for his frequent resistance to established authorities; but, if the circumstances of the time be fairly considered, it will be found that few men at such a difficult crisis displayed more boldness, united to more temper and discretion.

All ecclesiastical writers unite in lamenting that "Christianity purchased the privilege of being the religion acknowledged, defended, and protected by the state, at the sacrifice of a part of its ancient independence."* There is reason to suspect that Constantine meditated exchanging his pagan title of Pontifex Maximus, for that of "Head of the Christian church:" his son Constantius, and, at a later period, Valens, exercised a despotic power in ecclesiastical affairs, and after a very brief struggle the Eastern bishops were brought into complete dependence on the court. The feebleness of the

* Dollinger, C. v. s. 1.

imperial majesty prevented this subjugation of episcopacy in the West; but, in addition to this cause, the whole system of Italian usages, prejudices, and traditions had associated magisterial functions with the sacerdotal office, and constituted every clerical officer a part of the constitutional aristocracy, by which despotic power was to be restrained and controlled. The right of sanctuary, which was conceded to Christian churches in the beginning of the fifth century, may be regarded as an acknowledgement of a power in the church to mitigate the severities of the state; and, though it was grossly abused in later ages, there can be no doubt that its early exercise was beneficial. When successive invasions of the barbarians had swept away every vestige of the ancient Roman aristocracy, the hierarchy presented the only materials from which the framework of society could be reconstructed: the only legitimate authority remaining was that of the bishops and clergy; and, had they not taken upon themselves the duty of restoring order, universal anarchy must have prevailed. It may be said, that they should have resigned their power when the necessity for its exertion had passed away; but who was to judge of the termination of this necessity? With all the faults of the Western churches in the middle ages, we should ever gratefully remember that they maintained a government of intelligence against a despotism of brute force.

As the attachment of Constantine to the new religion became more marked, it must be confessed that there was a marked and increasing tendency in the Christian hierarchy to arrogate to themselves a share of the privileges and respect claimed by the pagan priesthood: but this is more attributable to the prejudices of their age and country, than to personal ambition or ostentation. It was even prudent to show by outward and material forms, the only signs which masses of men can comprehend, that the ascendancy had passed from the old religion to the new. These forms were, in fact, the most effective bulwarks of polytheism; and it is very doubtful whether Christianity, at least in the West, could have safely dispensed with the aid of similar entrenchments. In one respect, the sudden change of the Christian church from adversity to prosperity produced an injurious moral effect. Converts presented themselves in such crowds that it was no longer possible, even if it had been thought desirable, for the clergy to exercise the same vigilance and caution which had previously been displayed in the admission of members to the church. Numbers amongst these multitudes retained the principles of polytheism, while they made a profession of Christianity. They abandoned the pagan creed; they retained its superstitious prostration of intellect, its lax morality, and its taste for riot and disorder.

St. Jerome frequently notices the increasing corruption of manners among the Christians of his day: towards the close of his life he planned an ecclesiastical history, in which he intended to record, not the triumph, but the decline of the church;* he declares, however, that the task overwhelmed his feelings, and that he had not sufficient strength to trace the record. All the varied forms of divination and magical delusion became as popular among the Christians as ever they had been among the heathen, even when the more enlightened of the latter had rejected them with disdain.† Many of the sudden converts retained more distinct marks of paganism: they swore by false gods;‡ they kept pagan holidays, and made no scruple about sharing in the games and festivities dedicated to the tutelary gods of Rome. The simple majesty of the primitive Christian ceremonies was greatly deteriorated by the introduction of various corruptions; pagan odes were sung in the churches, and the congregations very frequently closed the services of the day by public dances

* "Divitiis major, virtutibus minor."—HIERON. iv. 2.

† St. Augustine declares that he had intended to study judicial astrology, but was dissuaded by a pagan physician, who demonstrated to him the falsehood and absurdity of that pretended science.—August. Confess. iv. 3.

‡ Tertullian. de Idol. c. 20.—He mentions *Mediusfidius* and *Mehercule* as instances of this bad habit. Oaths by the face and body of Bacchus are still common in Italy.

in front of the church.* Even in the interior of the churches the celebration of public worship was frequently interrupted by the most unbecoming behaviour; the congregations chatted, laughed, and jested while the Scriptures were read,

* Solemn dances were on great festivals and ceremonies admitted among the early Christians, in which the bishops, and others of the dignified clergy, took a conspicuous part. We believe that the custom was borrowed from the heathens, for we can find no traces of it in the two first centuries, and its practice was most rife when crowds of the half-converted were admitted into the church. Scaliger says, that the bishops were called *præsules* (literally, first dancers) from leading off the dance on these occasions. It is easy to throw ridicule on such scenes, and to speak of

> "Clerks, curates, and rectors, capering all,
> With a neat-legg'd bishop to open the ball;"

but the example of David shows that a dance may have a religious purpose, and female dancers accompanying themselves on the timbrels formed a part of the religious processions amongst the Jews. There is not less historic truth than poetic beauty in Milman's hymn of the Jewish maidens:—

> "King of kings, and Lord of lords!
> Thus we move, our sad steps timing
> To our timbrels' feeblest chiming,
> Where thy house its rest accords.
> Weak and wounded birds are we,
> Through the mid-air fled to Thee,
> To the shadow of thy wings,
> Lord of lords, and King of kings!"

This, however, is very different from the congregational dancing introduced into the Christian church, which was obviously borrowed from pagan extravagances, and, like them, not unfrequently led to immoral consequences.

so as to drown the voice of the officiating minister; indeed, he was not unfrequently obliged to cut short his lecture, and gratify the impatience of his audience by some favourite chaunt, or hymn. St. Augustine, who has described these scandalous scenes in terms of burning indignation, ascribes them to the influence of some dæmon more crafty and malignant than he who suggested the first persecutions of the Christian church.*

So early as the days of the apostles, several false teachers, probably connected with the Jewish sect of the Essenes, had recommended celibacy as a religious duty, or at least as a state highly acceptable to the Deity.† The principle of asceticism was received with favour in Italy, for ancient superstition had taught that married persons were more exposed to the influence of evil dæmons than those who led a single life;‡ and, as it was the interest of the faithful that no impure spirit should obtain mastery over those who were entrusted with the government of the church, it began to be generally believed that the ecclesiastics who lived in celibacy were endowed with a higher degree of holiness and purity than their married brethren. A contrary opinion prevailed in Greece; we find, from one of the earliest ecclesiastical historians of

* St. Augustine, ii. 268—320. See also x. 367—8; and the works of St. Ambrose, v. 46.

† 1 Tim. iv. 3.

‡ Comment. de Secr. in Mus. Port. 43.

the Eastern church,* that many of the Greeks regarded marriage as an indispensable condition of episcopacy. Indeed, when St. Athanasius wished to consecrate a monastic, named Deacontius, bishop, the latter declined the office on account of his reluctance to enter into the married state, "because it was the universal custom of the Greek bishops to have families." † In the controversy which arose respecting the marriage of the clergy, it is just to bear in mind that the Latin laity was decidedly in favour of enforcing celibacy. It is a great error to suppose that all the ecclesiastical constitutions were devised by the clergy with the deliberate purpose of increasing their own power. "The fact is, that in a great number of instances, and by no means exclusively in questions connected with religion, the erroneous belief or practice has risen first, and the theory has been devised afterwards for its support. Into whatever opinions or conduct men are led by any human propensities, they seek to defend and justify these by the best arguments they can frame; and then assigning, as they often do, in perfect sincerity, these arguments as the cause of their adopting such notions, they misdirect the course of our inquiry, and thus the chance (however small it may be at any rate) of rectifying their errors is diminished: for, if these be in reality traceable to some deep-seated principle of our nature, as soon as ever one

* Socrates, v. 21. † Id. loc. cit.

false foundation on which they have been placed is removed, another will be substituted; as soon as one theory is proved untenable, a new one will be devised in its place." * This was particularly the case with the doctrine of celibacy; it was first adopted, and then reasons were sought for its justification. In many parts of the Western empire, and particularly in England, the system was forced upon the clergy, who made the most strenuous resistance to such an unnatural yoke.† Nor did they stand alone; the synod of Ancyra permitted deacons to marry after their ordination, and the synod of Gangra condemned as a heresy the exclusion of married priests from officiating in the churches.

The principle of monasticism has always formed a part of the gloomy pantheism which, from time immemorial, has prevailed in Central Asia, and united itself with every form of religion that has been established between the Euphrates and the Eastern Ocean. It was introduced into Judæa by the Essenes,‡ but does not appear to have made much progress until about the time when Christianity was first promulgated. In Alexandria, Christian asceticism first assumed the form of a system. "The population of Alexandria at this period (the close of the fourth century) consisted of the most motley miscellany

* Archbishop Whately's Essays, 4th Series, p. 190.

† Walter Mapes, de Convocatione Sacerdotum.

‡ Josephus, Wars of the Jews, ii. 8.

of nations, religions, and sects, that had ever been brought together in one city. Beside the school of the Grecian Platonist was seen the oratory of the cabalistic Jew, while the church of the Christian stood undisturbed over the crypt of the Egyptian hierophant. Here the adorer of fire from the East laughed at the less elegant superstition of the worshipper of cats from the West. Here Christianity, too, had learned to emulate the pious vagaries of paganism; and while, on one side, her Ophite professor was seen bending his knee gravely before a serpent, on the other a Nicosian Christian was heard contending with no less gravity that there could be no chance whatever of salvation out of the pale of the Greek alphabet." * Asceticism was, however, not only "a pious vagary of paganism," but an established principle of Buddhism, the most extensive and influential creed that exists in Asia, and the principles of which are proved by the writings of Clemens Alexandrinus to have attracted considerable attention in Egypt. The rigid rules adopted by the Egyptian hermits and the Syrian monks were essentially the same as those of the Buddhist ascetics;† and St. Simon Stylites, who chose for his residence the top of a column under the open heaven, only gave an example of the

* Moore's Epicurean.

† See the Catechism of the Shamans in Neumann's translations from the Chinese and Armenian.

extravagant mortifications and penances which are still imposed upon themselves by fanatical devotees in India.

Monasticism was introduced into the West by St. Athanasius, who sought shelter in Rome after he had been expelled from his see in Alexandria. St. Jerome was an ardent partisan of the new system; but it was viewed with great jealousy by St. Augustine, who accused the monks of adopting a sacred profession from sheer dislike to honest industry.* Monasticism, however, was warmly favoured by the vulgar, to whom the visible sacrifice made by the monks and nuns appeared a solemn pledge of sincerity and devotion. The missionary exertions of the Benedictines may well redeem many of the scandals and immoralities attributed to the first outbreak of ascetic extravagance; they taught the precepts of Christianity and the arts of civilized life to races of savage barbarians, who were often incapable of feeling any gratitude to their instructors, because they could not appreciate the benefits which they conferred.

Enough has been said to show that Christianity was not indebted for the change in its institutions, consequent on its becoming an established, instead of a persecuted religion, to any plot or contrivance on the part of the clergy. It remains to show that the triumph of Christianity over paganism was in no way the result of imperial favour. We

* St. August. de op. monach. *passim.*

have seen that Roman polytheism was essentially and indissolubly connected with a political system which had become utterly inapplicable to the circumstances of the empire. No matter what was to come in its stead, from the moment that Rome ceased to be the metropolis of the world, and the Capitol the centre of religious worship, its fate was sealed. At the beginning of the fourth century, the existence of Roman polytheism, and of Grecian paganism, was purely factitious; political changes had cut away the roots of one, and philosophical inquiries of the other;* they lived merely by the force of habit, and possession constituted their sole power. Its warmest partisans remained faithful to idolatry, less from any sentiments of attachment or real piety, than from hatred of Christianity, and still more from hatred of the constitutional changes which the abolition of the old religion would render inevitable. Even the warmest advocates for the revival of paganism, such as the emperor Julian and the senator Symmachus, could not conceal their discouragement at the total want of real faith in the partisans of the system which they advocated. Polytheism was withered and dead in the hearts and souls of its defenders; where then could it have

* So early as the days of Pericles, the Athenians discovered that physical investigations would be fatal to their mythology, and they banished the first philosopher who taught a rational system of astronomy.

obtained the principle of vitality necessary to sustain it in a long and arduous struggle against a religion full of health, vigour, and animation? The nature of the contest was well intimated by the emperor Julian; he said that the advocates of paganism had to complain of an utter want of zeal in their supporters, while the great difficulty of the Christian leaders was to restrain the exuberant zeal of their followers. Between such combatants who can doubt the issue, even if Constantine had never existed, or never been converted? Constantine's conversion, indeed, multiplied the perils of polytheism, but it did not create them; it was not he who deprived the national rites of all influence over the conscience; and, consequently, it was not he who rendered their continuance a mere question of time and circumstance. We cannot tell what would have been the result on human affairs if any great event in the chain of circumstances had been ordained differently, but we may be well assured of the impossibility of preserving a religion disbelieved by its own votaries.

A religion that has within itself the principle of life, reveals itself, in spite of laws and princes. The history of the overthrow of polytheism itself furnishes a very striking exemplification of this truth. Paganism, defended in the court, the senate, and the cities, only by those who had a direct interest in maintaining its institutions, was power-

ful in the country; in the rural districts it found sincere conviction, complete devotion, and fanaticism at its need; hence the laws of the emperors, and the indefatigable exertions of the clergy, were insufficient, for many centuries, to eradicate pagan superstitions from the hearts of the peasantry. If all classes of society had been as honestly and as sincerely attached to the old system of error as the rustic population, it would have maintained its ground, in spite of twenty such emperors as Constantine and Theodosius. Many causes contributed to overthrow Roman polytheism; but the two chief, and the source of all the others, were, that, as a religion, it had no hold on the heart or understanding of its official advocates; and, as a political system, its decrepit institutions were inapplicable to the state of society, and were at the same time too rigid to be re-formed into new adaptations.

In fact, the ruin of the religious institutions of Roman polytheism was not a work very difficult to accomplish, and the success of the enterprise was never for a moment uncertain; the only requisites for the task were, sufficient decision not to be daunted by clamour, and sufficient skill to choose a proper time for striking each successive blow. When Gratian confiscated the property of the priesthood, and when Honorius closed the temples, there was abundance of agitation in the

empire, and loud complaints from all sides; but the property remained with its new possessors, and no attempt was made to re-open the temples. But when Christianity was to be established in the country, in the midst of a rude, uninstructed population, cruel from its barbarous ignorance, and full of a savage love for its ancient gods, conscience and obstinate customs equally resisted the attempt; the contest was prolonged for centuries, and taxed to the very utmost the zeal, the wisdom, and the power both of kings and pontiffs.

CHAPTER III.

The overthrow of Paganism and establishment of Christianity in the Western Empire.—Third Epoch: The exclusive establishment of Christianity.

PAGANISM had ceased to exist as an established institution when Valentinian III. ascended the throne; it had neither temples, priests, festivals, nor public sacrifices; but it still survived in the bosom of private families; the head of the house was its pontiff, and the domestic hearth its altar. Under these circumstances, every effort made for its extiraption involved a direct attack upon the conscience; and to such an unwise course the most eminent Christians of the fifth century felt an invincible repugnance. St. Augustine honourably distinguished himself by opposing some of his more ardent brethren, who wished to employ force in destroying the remnant of idolatry, and declared that polytheism must be exterminated gradually and slowly.* It does not appear that the pagans acted together as a party in any of the revolutions which at this time convulsed Italy;

* "Paulatim atque alternatim."—August. iii. 7.

they neither invited the Huns nor the Vandals, they took different sides in the election of emperors, and they did not hesitate to enter into the service of Christian sovereigns. When Arles was closely invested by the Goths, the command of the army sent to raise the siege was entrusted to Limirius, and his failure was attributed to his having placed "too much faith in the predictions of the soothsayers."* It is no wonder that the Christians complained loudly of a disaster originating in such a cause.

After the murder of Valentinian, the young nobles of Rome conspired to raise Marcellinus to the throne, and, at a subsequent period, the senate induced Leo, emperor of Constantinople, to name Anthemius emperor of the West; but, in both instances, the motives which influenced their conduct appear to have been purely political. Anthemius was a Neo-Platonist rather than a pagan: we can find no example of his attachment to polytheism in his public administration,† and it was only in private that he evinced his love for philosophy. St. Justin, St. Clement, Tatian, Origen, and many others, had actually declared that Platonism was a preparation for Christianity; and it was probably for this reason that none of the Italian

* Baronii Annal. ann. 439.

† There exists, however, a medal of Anthemius, having the representation of Hercules strangling the Nemean lion on the reverse. Vaillant, Num. Imp. iii. 629.

bishops protested against the elevation of Anthemius. The pagan spirit, which had been largely infused into Christianity, manifested itself in a multitude of forms, ceremonies, and observances, which became gradually established in the church. The festivals of martyrs were obviously borrowed from the heathen custom of deifying heroes, and the ancient system of sacrificing to the gods who presided over the shadowy kingdom of death.* A Spanish ecclesiastic, named Vigilantius, endeavoured to check this increasing superstition, and to restore the simple purity of Christianity as taught by the apostles. He protested against the adoration of saints, the lighting of candles at their sepulchres, the observance of their vigils in the churches and basilics erected to their honour,† and other usages, which were clearly derived from polytheism. The warmth, or rather the virulence, with which St. Jerome replied to Vigilantius, is a striking proof of the importance which was attached to these usages; and the Spaniard's proposed reform was universally scouted.

It is impossible to read and compare the Christian and heathen calendar, without being struck by coincidences too numerous and too marked

* "Diis Manibus" is inscribed on nearly all the Roman cinerary urns and ancient tombs.

† These vigils were reprehensible on moral ground, for scandalous intrigues were frequent on such occasions.—MÜLLER, ii. 16.

to have been accidental. The Saturnalia at the close of the year, and the heathen festival of New Year's day, correspond in time with Christmas week; the Purification of the Blessed Virgin takes the place of the ancient Lupercalia; St. Peter was substituted for Augustus, on the first of the month named after that emperor; and the rustic solemnities of the Ambarvalia were set aside only to be replaced by the Rogations. A still more striking example of this accommodating spirit was displayed in Sicily; the feast of Ceres was celebrated in Catania after harvest, and the clergy of that city deferred to the same period the feast of the Visitation, which was celebrated everywhere else on the 2nd of July.

When the empire of the West was subverted by Odoacer, and soon after the dynasty of the Ostrogoths had been established in Italy, the Fathers of the Western churches began more decidedly to adopt pagan institutions and usages, probably for the purpose of strengthening themselves against the Arians, whose tenets had been adopted by the kings of the Goths, the Vandals, and the Burgundians. In pursuance of this principle either of philosophic eclecticism or prudent conciliation, several of the ancient temples were converted into churches, and in some instances were even allowed to retain their ancient names.* The

* Four churches at Rome still retain their pagan denomina-

strength of paganism was broken when the Roman aristocracy was destroyed; Christianity had no longer any doctrines to contend against: the only obstacles to its spread were ancient usages and inveterate customs; and, humanly speaking, it was a wise course of policy to Christianize these by adopting them in the church, and thus rendering them subservient to the progress of that religion which they had hitherto mainly prevented.

Among the causes which may be assigned for the rapid progress of Christianity in Western Europe after the subversion of the empire, the increased reverence and adoration shown to the Virgin Mary deserves to be particularly noticed.* Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, in developing his theory respecting the double nature of Christ, which was, in fact, nothing more than a modification of Arianism, declared that the maternity of Mary extended only to Christ's human nature, and, therefore, that she was falsely called the "Mother of God." A fierce controversy arose; and those who took the part of the Virgin Mary brought her more and more prominently forward in every discussion, and added to the virtues of her idèal character until she became a personification of all

tions; viz. S. Maria sopra Minerva, S. Maria Aventina, S. Lorenzo in Matuta, and S. Stefano del Cacco. At Sienna, the temple of Quirinus has become the church of S. Quiricus.—REUGNOT, ii. 266.

* "Pour beaucoup de Chrétiens, ce culte devint le Christianisme tout entier.—REUGNOT, ii. 271.

the feelings most likely to influence the affections. In her were shown the most tender sentiments of nature—the modesty of a virgin, and the enduring love of a mother: she was the emblem of mildness, of resignation, and of every sublime virtue; she appeared as weeping for the wretched and pleading for the guilty, and she was never introduced except as the messenger of relief and forgiveness. The adoration of the Virgin is, in fact, the tenet to which Romanists at the present day adhere most strongly, and we know it to have been the most seductive in the instances of conversion from Protestantism which have come under our notice. It was this principle—which, though not new in the fifth century, then for the first time occupied a prominent part in the Christian creed,—united to the concession made to pagan usages, that enabled the church to consummate its peaceful triumph in the midst of the fearful wars which swept away every vestige of ancient civilisation.

There is little interest in tracing out the lingering existence of Roman polytheism in the sixth and seventh centuries. Incidental passages in the writings of the Fathers show that direct homage was sometimes paid to the ancient gods; and they abound in proofs that pagan practices, preserved by tradition, were very common amongst Christians. Towards the close of the seventh century, however, all that remained of Roman polytheism among the Latin races appears to have become

amalgamated with Christianity, and the church directed its exclusive attention to the conversion of the Saxons and other Germanic tribes.

German polytheism, though essentially distinct from Greek and Roman mythology, was to some extent united in Gaul with the ancient religion of Rome: Thor was identified with Jupiter, Odin with Mercury, and Friga with Venus. Hence there appear vestiges of Roman polytheism in Gaul during the eighth century, which are really parts of German idolatry revived by the barbarians who wrested the country from the Gallo-Romans. The German mythology possessed greater vitality than Roman polytheism, because its strength was derived from the obstinacy of ignorance. It was useless for missionaries to point out the folly of one practice, or the wickedness of another, to men who possessed neither intelligence nor morality, and who never once thought of a reason for any action whatever. Men were slow to discover that the only remedy for superstition is education, because it is impossible to convince men until they are so far instructed as to understand the nature of argument. Several ecclesiastical historians have harshly blamed the Gallic clergy for not rooting out the remnants of polytheism from the cities and villages; but they could only do so by employing brute force, which was not in their power, for the barbarians who adhered to paganism were inaccessible to reason. Force was indeed employed when a sovereign was

found sufficiently strong to maintain a system of persecution, but it must be remembered that this force was only employed against barbarism; Christianity triumphed over Roman polytheism without having had any occasion to use persecution. Intolerant edicts were occasionally issued by the emperors; but their effect was scarcely perceptible, and certainly they had no material influence on the issue. The very reverse was the case with German polytheism; it was conquered by the sword, and the emperor Charlemagne may claim the undivided merit of its overthrow.

The Gothic monarchy in Italy was overthrown by the Byzantines, and Rome for a time bowed beneath the yoke of Constantinople; but the Greek emperors never possessed the hearty allegiance of the Italians, and their authority over the peninsula was merely nominal. It was inevitable that the authority refused to the sovereign and his officers should devolve upon the clergy, because there was no other body of men in Italy that could wield political power. In Gaul, the successors of Clovis confided the greater part of the public administration to the clergy for a similar reason, and thus episcopacy became every day more secularized until it assumed both the form and substance of a political aristocracy. In the age of Constantine no one would have supposed that the great revolution which then commenced would have ended in substituting the Christian clergy for the Roman patri-

cians, and that the new religion would invest itself with the institutions of the old, exhibiting in the Roman papacy all the political forms of Roman polytheism.

When Constantine ascended the throne, Rome was the sacred city of paganism, the metropolis of the ancient gods, whose sovereign was a spiritual pontiff officially bound to maintain the established idolatry. As such it was viewed with horror by the great body of Christians; they compared it to Babylon and Sodom, they predicted its speedy destruction, and believed that Christianity would not triumph until it was swept from the earth. But when Charlemagne was crowned emperor of the West, Rome had become the sacred city of Christianity, the metropolis of the triumphant religion, and the residence of a spiritual sovereign whose authority was beginning to be recognized throughout Christendom. So completely had the principle of accommodation with paganism been carried out, that the principal difference between the old pagan and the new Christian Rome in their political aspect was, that in the former the pontifical title was generally lost in the imperial, but in the latter the dignity of pontiff was set far above all temporal honours.

We have seen that Christianity, as a political institution, had borrowed largely from Roman polytheism: north of the Alps it was further corrupted by an infusion of German barbarism.

Among the northern tribes, the custom of atoning for the greatest crimes by pecuniary fines had been long sanctioned by law. The French clergy adopted this rule, and taught that sins, even of the darkest dye, might be expiated by largesses to the church.* Abbeys and monasteries were multiplied in France, monuments at once of the sins of princes and the influence of the church; these foundations were received as such evidence of piety, that Pope Gregory I. did not hesitate to eulogize the infamous Brunehault as a model of sanctity.

Gaul, after its conquest by Julius Cæsar, had become thoroughly Roman in its usages, feelings, language, and religion. Traces of the old Druidical creed might, indeed, be found in some remote districts, rendered almost inaccessible by mountains and forests; but in the cities the Latin ritual was triumphant, and its influence was continually strengthened by the schools which were established in the principal cities for the purpose of instructing the Gallic youth in the elements of Roman literature and civilisation. Roman polytheism, however, had not the same political strength north of the Alps which it had in Italy; the Gauls, like the Greeks, were left free to admire the poetical elements of the established mythology, and to interpret or explain them away by philosophical discussion at their pleasure. Gallic polytheism had no creed; it was divested of the

* Muratori, Diss. de rem. peccat. in Antiq. med. ævi, v. 712.

great article of faith in the established religion, which was—the eternal and sanctified supremacy of Rome. When Christianity began to adopt the forms and institutions of paganism, the Gauls were left without a motive for dissenting from the new religion; and, so far as the imperfect notices of its condition after the age of Constantine enable us to determine, the paganism which survived in the country was either the obscure fragments of ancient Druidism, or the traditions of German mythology introduced by the Franks. The first dynasty of Frank monarchs, the Merovingians, hastened to lay aside their nationality; in everything but language they were Gallo-Romans: a second dynasty appeared, which was essentially Teutonic: the Carlovingians re-conquered Gaul: the Franks of the first conquest had almost entirely disappeared from Aquitain, Provence, Burgundy, and even from Neustria; so that, when Charles Martel, or Pepin, led their Austrasian armies into these provinces, the inhabitants regarded these Germanic soldiers as strangers and enemies! *

It might have been reasonably expected that the papal court would have made common cause with the Merovingian kings, who were essentially Romans; but, on the contrary, we find the popes steadily adhering to the cause of the rival race, sending ambassadors to Charles Martel while he was yet a subject, sanctioning the assumption of

* Sismondi, ii. 171.

royal power by Pepin, and finally crowning Charlemagne emperor of the West. It is, indeed, a singular fact, that the sympathies of the papacy during the middle ages were almost invariably granted to invaders, and refused to the nations that fought for their independence. Papal bulls encouraged the conquest of Neustria by the Austrasians, of England by the Norman William, and of Ireland by the first of the Plantagenets. "Charlemagne, claimed by the church as a saint, by the French as their greatest king, by the Germans as their fellow-countryman, and by the Italians as their emperor, stands at the head of nearly all modern histories." * It was he who swept away the last vestiges of the old Roman system, and it was he who put an end to German paganism, and established the supremacy of Christianity over barbarism, after it had triumphed by its own strength over civilised polytheism. The empire which he founded was the bulwark of the new system of civilisation which was growing up beside the decaying trunk of polytheism; against the strength which he consolidated the last waves of the barbarian invasions were broken, and a respite was granted, during which Christendom completed the framework of those institutions which a new state of society imperatively required. The triumph of Christianity over polytheism was not complete until the religion of the Gospels had shown itself as

* Sismondi, ii. 217.

potent to create as it had been to destroy, until it had given a new system of legislation to replace the ancient codes which it destroyed.

It was under the Carlovingian monarchs that the great principle of individual responsibility, first revealed in the Gospels, began to appear prominently as an element of European civilisation. "The sense of personality and the feeling of individual responsibility are among the most ennobling and civilising principles that could be suggested to man; but, probably, there are no elements of civilisation more difficult to be retained. It is ever necessary 'to have the loins girded about and the lamp burning,' to be watchful and vigilant, lest the temptation of substituting dependence on others for personal exertion should prevail. Every great movement that has been made for the advantage of humanity has been more or less frustrated by the natural propensity to keep out of view the necessity for individual labour. The forms in which this propensity appears are as various as the pursuits of mankind. From the man of business, who hopes that, by some prosperous traffic or grand speculation, in which others shall bear the toil and he reap the profit, to the legislator who aspires to direct the affairs of a nation by blindly following precedent, and avoiding the trouble of thinking;—from the schoolboy, who relies on his companion for the completion of his exercises, to the adult Christian, who looks to his priest or his church for salvation,

— all and each are eager to get rid of individual responsibility, and to perform the duties of life by proxy."*

This great principle of Christianity was more warmly received, and more thoroughly appreciated, by the Germans than the Romans. Among the Teutonic races the first and moving principle was the personal independence and dignity of the individual man; with the Romans the state was everything, and the individual nothing. Roman Christianity had, as we have seen, borrowed largely from Roman polytheism; and, if we simply change the word "state" into "church," we shall find that the new Roman system demanded scarcely less sacrifice of individual right to general society than the old. This may help us to explain the short duration of the alliance between what may be called Romanism and Germanism; an alliance, indeed, which was virtually dissolved at the death of Charlemagne.

The triumph of Christianity under Charlemagne was two-fold; it was both physical and moral: he crushed the savage idolatry of Germany by force; he destroyed the institutions of Roman polytheism by legislation. In fact, he was the first Christian emperor, for he was the first who reigned by virtue of Christian institutions. His long contests with the idolatrous Saxons, though really less important than his peaceful triumph over the last traces of civilised paganism, must not be entirely omitted;

* Natural History of Society, ii. 176.

they exhibit to us the struggle between barbarism and Christianity, not only in the field of war, but in the individual mind of the emperor himself.

About the year 772, a missionary priest, named St. Liberius,* presented himself at the annual assembly of the Saxon tribes, and exhorted them to embrace Christianity, menacing them, in case of refusal, with the vengeance of the great king of the Franks, who would lay waste their country by fire and sword. The indignant Saxons were with difficulty restrained from tearing the messenger to pieces; they were, however, induced to respect him as an ambassador from a strange and foreign deity: but, to show their hatred for the potentate whose menaces had been brought them, they burned the new church of Deventer, and massacred the congregation which was there assembled. Charlemagne instantly took up arms to revenge the war: he destroyed the colossal idol of Herman-saul, which some have regarded as the representative of the German nations, and others as a statue raised in honour of the national hero Herminius;† and he issued an edict, peremptorily commanding the vanquished to embrace Christianity. The Saxons rejected the new creed, which they regarded as an

* Sancti Lib. Vit. apud Pagi Crit. 772, s. 5.

† The two theories are not inconsistent; Herminius probably was named after the tutelary deity of his race, and the bards who celebrated his victories may have confounded him with the god, a circumstance common enough in the poetical eulogies of all nations.

emblem of servitude; and the contest, which was at once a war of religion and of independence, was protracted for more than thirty years. The merciless cruelty with which Charlemagne treated the Saxons has been generally attributed to fanaticism, but it is evident that he viewed them as rebels rather than as heathens; his worst crime, the atrocious massacre of four thousand five hundred Saxons at Verden, was the act of a despot, and not of a persecutor. The victims were given up by the Saxon counts as the persons who had taken up arms at the instigation of Witikind, and no contemporary writer notices their attachment to paganism as a cause of their being ruthlessly butchered. The Saxons were finally overthrown, and incorporated with the Franks; but, long afterwards, traces could be found of their old idolatrous usages being practised, in spite of imperial edicts and clerical remonstrances.

The triumph of Christianity was completed when Charlemagne was crowned emperor of the West; but it must not be supposed that every trace of the ancient religion was effaced, that a system of civilisation entirely new was established in Europe, and that the records of history alone preserved any memorial of the ideas, habits, prejudices, and errors which had previously reigned in Western Europe. The system of Roman civilisation reposed on too large a base, and had penetrated too deeply into the habits both of public and private

life, to allow of its disappearing entirely from the world. It is not necessary to enter into an investigation of modern society in Europe, and to show how many superstitions, ridiculous practices, and dangerous errors, the legitimate descent of which can clearly be traced to polytheism, may still be found in Christendom. The physical and political supremacy of Christianity has been established, but it has a greater triumph yet to come; its moral and intellectual reign has scarcely yet begun, but, so far as the antagonist principles derived from paganism have permitted the spirituality of the Christian religion to assert its ascendancy, it has amply fulfilled the glorious promise of the herald angels, and has produced "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good-will towards men!"

CHAPTER IV.

The Moors in Spain. — Dangers to which Christianity was exposed in Western Europe.

CORRUPT as Christianity had become in the West during the interval between Constantine and Charlemagne, its deterioration in the East under the despotism of the Byzantine emperors had been more rapid and infinitely more extensive. Roman policy was the instrument of deterioration in the West, and its influence principally extended to forms and institutions: false philosophy was the great source of Grecian error; it assailed Christianity in its inner life, it perverted its creed and its doctrines. A merchant in the Arabian city of Mecca, who had been often led in the course of his commercial speculations to visit Syria and other parts of the Eastern empire, having acquired such a competence as afforded him leisure for retirement and reflection, felt dissatisfied with the senseless idolatry practised by his countrymen, while he was scarcely less disgusted with the corrupt form in which Christianity was presented to his notice by the Syrian and Greek churches. Mistaking his desire to effect a reform for a divine

impulse, he proclaimed himself a prophet, and entered on his mission under circumstances of such obvious disadvantage as to leave no room for doubting his sincerity. For many years his success was so trifling, that nothing but firm conviction could have induced him to persevere. He was driven into exile, and found that his claims to the character of a prophet were more readily recognized at Yatreb than in his own country. As his power increased, imposture began to blend with his enthusiasm; he persuaded his followers that victory in a trifling skirmish was obtained by supernatural agency, and such a report sufficed to attract crowds of ambitious soldiers to his standard. In a few years Mohammed found himself lord of Arabia, and followed by a multitude of the bravest soldiers then existing, all of whom believed it to be their duty to impose the new religion preached by their master upon every nation and kingdom under the sun.

The military spirit kindled in Arabia, stimulated by fanaticism and animated by success, could not be held in restraint by the Byzantine and Persian empires, both of which had sunk into a state of weakness and decay which disabled them from making any vigorous opposition. In less than twenty years, Syria, Egypt, and Persia were subdued by the Saracens, as the Mohammedan Arabs were called; but it required more than half a century to complete the conquest of Western Africa,

and extend the empire of the new religion to the shores of the Atlantic.

The extensive conquests of the Saracens, and the rapid diffusion of Mohammedanism, appear to have excited little or no attention in Western Europe; even the conquest of Northern and Western Africa was regarded as a simple revolt against the Greek emperors; the Saracens were allowed to incorporate the Moors into their own body* without interruption: nor, indeed, did Europe awake from this lethargy until Spain had been completely subdued, and the Saracens from the summit of the Pyrenees speculated on the entire conquest of Christendom. It is almost impossible to conceive the apathy of an age in which the conquest of Spain by the Mohammedans was deemed too unimportant to be recorded in the contemporary chronicles: at a later period, when the importance of the event was understood, the defects of the chronicles were supplied by conjecture or vague tradition, and hence the history of this great revolution is still to a great extent in-

* The sudden disappearance of Christianity in Northern Africa is a phenomenon that has not been explained by ecclesiastical writers: nowhere does the profession of the Gospel appear to have been more eagerly embraced, and the zeal of its bishops was too often carried to an extravagant excess; yet we do not find that any prelate, or preacher, took a part in supporting the resistance and animating the courage of his countrymen during the half-century which elapsed before the conquest was completed.

volved in obscurity. The abundance, indeed, of Arabian records may seem to atone for the paucity of Christian documents; but Oriental writers allow themselves such licence of invention that their statements require to be received with the utmost caution.

In examining the history of the transactions which led to the establishment of a Mohammedan empire in Spain, it will be necessary for us to search for historical facts in the pages of legend and romance; and we must, therefore, often be contented with obtaining for a result, not so much absolute truth, as a near approach to probability. We shall, therefore, carefully distinguish that which is conjectural from that which may be regarded as tolerably certain; and, at the same time, we shall direct attention to such fictions,—giving them, of course, merely as legends,—which have become conspicuous in literary history.

When the Visigoths first established a kingdom in Spain, they were strongly attached to Arianism, a creed which was probably recommended to their monarchs by its exalting the power of royalty over episcopacy. The conquered Spaniards, or, as they were called in the sixth century, the Romans, adhered firmly to the Catholic faith, and were often severely persecuted for their orthodoxy.* At length Recared, who was raised to the throne about the year 586, having gained a great victory over the

* Mariana, Hist. de España, lib. iii. and iv.

Franks, felt himself sufficiently strong to propose to his grandees and prelates the adoption of the Catholic faith; and the change was adopted without any appearance of immediate resistance. The favour which the monarch began to show to his Roman or Spanish subjects gave great offence to the Gothic nobility; they were indignant when they saw the prelates of a race long held in subjection invited to meet them on terms of equality in the royal councils; they soon organized several formidable conspiracies, but their plots were detected and severely punished. The nobles were deprived of their titles and estates; some of them were mutilated, and others reduced to slavery. Count Vanila sought shelter in the church of St. Eulalia: the privilege of sanctuary saved his life; but he was condemned to remain the slave of that church for life, and to perform every menial office enjoined by its clergy.*

Most of the Gothic nobility having been destroyed, the prelates of Spain formed the aristocracy of the kingdom, and its laws began to emanate from their councils. Great numbers of Jews had settled in Spain and in Northern Africa; indeed, it is said that Judaism was professed by several tribes of the Berbers, and that this circumstance greatly facilitated their conversion to the Mohammedan faith.† Sisebert, who was elected

* Mariana, Hist. de España, v. 14.

† Gayangos's Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain, i. 511.

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king in 612, chiefly by the influence of the clergy, soon after his accession published a law by which all Jews who refused to become Christians were sentenced to capital punishment. Nearly at the same time the Byzantine emperor, Heraclius, and Dagobert, king of France, offered to this unhappy people the alternative of baptism or exile. Thus commenced a sad era for the remnant of Israel, whose religion for many centuries excited the intolerance of the clergy, while their wealth provoked the rapacity of kings.*

The exterminating edicts of Sisebert were not obeyed, for we find repeated penal laws passed against the Jews by the councils of Toledo: the sixth of these assemblies further enacted, that no monarch, after his election, should enter upon the regal functions until he had bound himself by oath to adhere inviolably to the laws made against the Jewish nation. Finally, the seventeenth council of Toledo confiscated all the property of the Jews, assigned the adults as slaves to Christians, and ordained that all their children should be

* Mariana asserts that Sisebert was engaged to commence this persecution by Heraclius, who, being much addicted to judicial astrology, and other superstitions of the same kind, had been exceedingly troubled about a prophecy that the empire should speedily be subverted by a wandering and circumcised nation, enemies to the Christian faith; which he applied to the Jews. Mondejar, however, has shown that Sisebert published his persecuting edicts some years before he had any communication with Constantinople.

brought up in the Catholic religion.* This severity provoked an insurrection; the Spanish Jews applied for aid to their brethren in Northern Africa, and this was probably the remote cause of the subsequent invasion of the Saracens. So much obscurity involves this portion of Spanish history, that it is impossible to discover how this insurrection was suppressed. The Jews, however, must have been still powerful, for some degree of toleration was granted them by Witiza; a circumstance which gave great offence to many of the Spanish prelates. Witiza was deposed, most probably by the clergy; for their body had already assumed the privilege of removing kings from the throne.† They elected, in his stead, Don Roderic, the last of the Gothic monarchs of Spain.

According to the romances, Roderic, in the beginning of his reign, fore-doomed himself and his kingdom to destruction, by violating the sanctuary in which the tutelary spell of the Gothic monarchy was preserved. The legend is too amusing to be omitted; especially as the versions given of it by Southey, Scott, and Washington Irving, have esta blished for it a place in English literature. In times of old, the kings of Spain were alarmed by

* A. D. 694.

† Wamba, having been induced by the archbishop of Toledo to drink a drugged potion, had his head shaved, and was clothed in a penitential robe, during his sleep. The twelfth council declared that this involuntary tonsure disqualified him as a king, and consigned him to the cloister.

a prophecy that their monarchy would be overturned by the Berbers of Western Africa, and they therefore summoned all the magicians of the kingdom together. By their aid a potent spell was constructed, sufficient, so long as it endured, to counteract the efforts of every invader; it was enclosed within a marble urn, and placed in one of the palaces of Toledo. To ensure its safe custody and preservation, the reigning monarch placed a padlock on the gate of the palace, leaving instructions for every succeeding king to do the same. This injunction was faithfully observed through many generations; so that, when Roderic ascended the throne, twenty-seven padlocks secured the gate of the building. Soon after Roderic had ascended the throne, he found his finances in a state of great embarrassment, and was at a loss to discover means for defraying the ordinary expenses of the state. He began to think that some treasure was concealed in the closed palace, and declared his intention of investigating the secret. His ministers vainly endeavoured to dissuade him; they even offered to subscribe from their own fortunes an equivalent for the treasure he expected: but resistance only sharpened Roderic's curiosity, and he commanded them to attend him to "the fatal palace."* When he ar-

* *Fatale Palatium* is the name given to the supposed enchanted building by Roderic, archbishop of Toledo, who speaks of it as still existing. Nunez intimates that the pretended palace was the ruins of an ancient amphitheatre.

rived at the portal, he wrenched away the twenty-seven locks; upon which, the folding-gates flew open with a jarring and ominous sound. The first object that met the view was a large table made of gold and silver, and set with precious stones, upon which was the following inscription: "This is the table of Solomon, the son of David, upon whom be peace." Near the table stood the urn within which the spell was deposited, secured by a very strong padlock, which Roderic removed. Within it he found a roll of parchment, and a picture representing in the brightest colours several horsemen, looking like Arabs, dressed in the skins of animals, and having locks of coarse hair instead of turbans; they were mounted on fleet Arabian steeds, bright scimitars hung by their sides, and their right hands were armed with spears. Roderic ordered the parchment to be unrolled, and the following verses were found inscribed upon it in large letters:

"When this sacred spell is broken,
When this parchment is unroll'd,
'Tis to Spain of ruin token,
Sign of woe by tongue untold.

"Then shall come the mighty nation
Figured on this fatal scroll,
Spreading wrack and desolation,
Killing body, cursing soul.

"War, disease, and famine blended,
Opening of this urn must bring;
And the Gothic line is ended
In a brave, but guilty, king."

Roderic was bowed down to the earth by sorrow and repentance when this doom was pronounced; but it was no longer possible to avert the calamity. He soon after received intelligence of the approach of the Arabs, and led his forces to meet them in the field of Guadalete. There, as he was advancing upon the Moslems, he saw for the first time before his eyes the very men whose representations were upon the parchment, and was filled with despair.*

"Whether this account is true, or not," says the worthy Arabian whose version of the legend we have followed, "God only knows, for we find it related in various ways by the historians."† We think that there may be some grain of historic truth in this legend, and we may compare it with an incident in the life of Mohammed. "Yatreb was occupied by two tribes; one of idolatrous Arabs, and one of Jews. A fierce war arose between the rival races; it terminated in the conquest of the Jews, who were reduced to slavery.

* Señor Gayangós has indisputably proved the Arabic origin of this legend, which Sir Walter Scott denied. The Spanish romancers have, indeed, altered it to their own taste; but the changes which they introduced are far from being improvements. The common Spanish version of the story is given in the notes to Scott's Vision of Don Roderic.

† Gayangos's Trans. of Al-Makkari's Moham. Dynas. of Spain, i. 262.—There are several other strange legends, related by Al-Makkari, connected with Don Roderic, who appears to have been as great a favourite of Moorish as of Christian romancers.

Amid their sufferings they were frequently heard to exclaim, 'Oh! if the appointed time of the Messiah had arrived, we would seek him, and he would deliver us from this tyranny.' When the Yatrebite pilgrims to the national temple of the Kaaba, which was honoured by the Arabs in the age of their paganism as much as at the present day, heard the account of the new prophet at Mecca, they said to one another, 'Can this be the Messiah of whom the Jews are constantly speaking? Let us find him out, and gain him over to our interests.' Mohammed at once saw what an advantage he had gained by such a prepossession; he declared that he was the person whom the Jews expected, but that his mission was not confined to a single people, for all who believed in God and his prophet should share its advantages." *

It is, indeed, a marked feature in the modern history of the Jews, that whenever they were most cruelly oppressed, their hopes of a speedy and miraculous deliverance were raised to the highest pitch. We may, therefore, reasonably conjecture, that at the time when they applied for aid to the Berbers and Saracens, as they did repeatedly before the actual Moorish invasion, in consequence of the galling servitude to which they were reduced by the council of Toledo, they circulated prophecies of the overthrow of their op-

* Taylor's History of Mohammedanism, 105.

pressors, and the triumph of those deliverers whom they expected from Africa. Such prophecies, in which "the wish was father to the thought," are common in all countries where penal laws are established: during the middle of the last century prophecies were circulated among the Irish Catholics, pointing out the Pretender as their political Messiah; and, had the Stuarts been restored to the throne of England, legendary history would have received a large accession of the omens and prodigies presumed to have heralded the event. We are, therefore, led to believe that the legend of "the fatal palace," which the Spaniards unquestionably borrowed from the Arabs, was suggested to the latter by the Jews, whose longings for deliverance assumed the shape of presages which the event changed into prophecies.

A less wondrous but more romantic tale, borrowed by the Spaniards from the Arabian writers, is related, to explain the immediate cause of the Moorish invasion. The legend states, that Count Julian, the bravest of the Gothic generals, was entrusted by Roderic with the government of Ceuta on the African coast, a strip of which formed a province of the Gothic monarchy. While engaged in defending his charge from the Saracens, whom he twice defeated before the walls of Ceuta, he sent his daughter for safety and education to the court of Toledo. The young lady, who is called

Florinda by Spanish, and Caba by Saracenic writers, was equally distinguished by her beauty and virtue. Roderic, who had accidentally seen her charms, vainly attempted to seduce her into a compliance with his wishes, and, when solicitation failed, had recourse to violence. Florinda was so closely watched, that she had no direct means of communicating the wrong she had suffered to her father: with some difficulty she obtained permission to send him some robes, and in the parcel she enclosed a withered flower as a symbol of the blight that had fallen on her fame.* Julian understood the hint; he hastened to Toledo, and besought the king to permit him to take his child back to Ceuta, that she might see her mother who was dangerously ill. Roderic, having first exacted an oath of secrecy from Florinda, gave permission; and the lady, notwithstanding her oath, revealed to her father the author of her disgrace. When Julian went to his last audience, Roderic, on bidding him farewell, said, "Count, I hope that I shall soon hear of thee, and that thou wilt endeavour to procure me some of those very swift hawks which are found in thy government, since none equal them in bringing down the game." Julian replied, "Doubt not, O king, that I will soon be back; and, by the faith of the Messiah!

* According to some authors, the lady employed the far less poetical symbol of a rotten egg.—Moham. Dyn. i. 512.

I will never rest satisfied until I bring thee such hawks as thou never sawest in thy life." Roderic did not suspect the covert threat implied in this answer; he parted from the count in apparent cordiality and friendship. Julian no sooner returned to Africa than he entered into communication with the Saracens, and induced them to undertake the conquest of Spain. Cervantes informs us, that the Spaniards, in detestation of Florinda's treachery and violated oath, never bestow that name upon any human female, reserving it for their dogs. Nor is her memory less odious among the Moors, since the same author mentions a promontory on the coast of Barbary, called "the Cape of the Caba Rumia," which in our tongue is "the Cape of the Wicked Christian Woman;" and it is a tradition among the Moors, that Caba, the daughter of Count Julian, who was the cause of the loss of Spain, lies buried there, and they think it ominous to be forced into that bay, for they never go in otherwise than by necessity.

The whole of this narrative has been rejected as fabulous by Gibbon, Voltaire, and the modern Spanish critics; and if it only rested on the authority of the Christian historians, or rather romance-writers, of Spain, we should acquiesce in their decision. But the unanimous voice of the Arab writers, some of whom were contemporary with the events, deserves to be received as weighty evidence; and we shall, therefore, deduce from their statements what

may be considered as the authenticated facts of the case.*

It is certain that a ruler named Ilyán by the Moors, but which probably means Ælian, rather than Julian, was governor of Ceuta when Western Africa was invaded by the Saracens; he was, probably, a tributary to the Gothic kings, but at the same time was sufficiently independent to treat with them on nearly equal terms. On the approach of the Arabs, he would naturally seek to strengthen his connection with the Gothic court, and there is no improbability in the story of his having sent his daughter thither, perhaps as a hostage.

The Tarquinian crime imputed to Roderic may be true or false, but in any case it was not the sole cause of Ilyán's defection to the Saracens; we find that he acted in conjunction with the sons of the deposed king, Witiza, and with their uncle, Oppas, archbishop of Toledo, who were opposed to Roderic as an unjust usurper of the rights of their family. That Ilyán was a Christian, is asserted by all the authorities; but if, as is most probable, he belonged to that mixed population of Romans, Vandals, Numidians, and Greeks, which possessed all the ports and fortified towns of Western Africa

* We have closely followed the line of investigation pursued by Señor Gayangos (Moham. Dyn. of Spain, i. 538); and gratefully acknowledge our obligations to his laborious research and critical sagacity.

at the time of the Saracenic invasion, his religion would have sat very lightly on him, even if he were not a heretic, as most of his countrymen were at the time. The persecuting spirit of the Spanish clergy, of which the records of the council of Toledo afford ample proof, must have predisposed to revolt the remnant of the Arians and Donatists, as well as the Jews. Ilyán must have been well aware of this general disaffection, and communicated it, no doubt, to the Saracenic governor of Africa, who was, of course, more ready to attack a divided than a united people.

Roderic's throne was assailed by the partisans of King Witiza; by the Jews, whom the deposed monarch had shown some anxiety to protect; by the remnant of the Arians in Spain; by the African Berbers, who sympathized with the persecuted Jews;* and, most probably, by some of the heterodox sects in Africa which had been menaced by the councils of Toledo. It is not easy to determine to which of these parties Ilyán belonged, probably he had more or less connection with each of them; and if, as the legend states, he had also personal wrongs to redress, the Gothic monarchy was in so distracted a condition, that any insur-

* According to D'Herbelot, the Berbers had a tradition, probably suggested to them by the Jews, that their forefathers were of Semitic descent: some identified them with the remnant of the Amalekites, who escaped from the general massacre of their nation in the reign of Saul.

gent chief would be sure to find a number of enthusiastic partisans.

It may be deemed improbable, that any Christian sect would enter into alliance with the partisans of Mohammedanism, and even prefer that creed to the established system of Christianity. The improbability, however, is but seeming; it has arisen from regarding the prophet of Mecca as the founder of a new religion, and not merely as the author of a new heresy. "Mohammedanism is not wholly a system of imposture; it is partially so: but it is also partially a direct imitation of Christianity, and an imitation that preserves no small portion of its divine original. Its history clearly proves, that its success was due to the truths, and not to the falsehoods, it contained; that its triumphs were obtained through the portion of the Christian system which it borrowed; and, therefore, that, so far as its permanence and prevalence can be quoted as evidences, they bear more decisive testimony in favour of the Gospel than of the Koran."* Sufficient attention has not been paid to the total want of originality in the Mohammedan system: the Koran is a curious admixture of Oriental superstitions, rabbinical reveries, and the falsifications of Christian heretics; the whole of the Scripture history which it repeats is derived from the Talmud, from the apocryphal

* Taylor's History of Mohammedanism, 7.

gospels, from the idle dreams of Jewish doctors, and the still more idle legends of Syrian monks.* Mohammed has with some tact accommodated the various parts of this heterogeneous collection to the preconceived notions and views of different sects, and has introduced several alterations, not only to disguise imitation, but to give an appearance of cohesion to the incongruous materials. But independent invention is not to be found; even the sublime fiction of the "Night of Power," when all animate and inanimate nature must unite in doing homage to their great Creator, is a Jewish figment derived from too literal an interpretation of the nineteenth psalm. The prosaic mind of the rabbis could not comprehend David's glorious personification, "The Heavens declare the glory of God, and the Firmament showeth his handy-work;" they taught, and they were servilely followed by the monks in teaching, that, on the anniversary of the creation, all the works of God repeated the homage described in the book of Job, "when the morning-stars sang together, and all the sons of

* It is impossible to read the writings of Ephrem Syrus, without discovering that Mohammed derived from that worthy bishop his absurd theories of the universe, the situation of the earthly paradise, and the nature of celestial phenomena. The Mohammedan cosmology and geography are, in fact, identical with the monkish views of these sciences promulgated in the middle ages, and which are even now held by the uneducated in most Christian countries.

God shouted for joy."* Mohammed only added, that it was on this sacred night he was taken up by the angel Gabriel into the seventh heaven.

"By transferring a certain portion of Christianity into the Koran, the prophet of Mecca cast, as it were, a vivifying principle into the otherwise dull and inert mass; giving it a plausibility and consistence sufficient to pass at a dark benighted period before printing was discovered, while knowledge was at a low ebb, and access to sources of information difficult."† Although the spurious and apocryphal gospels are now universally rejected, they were received in the days of Mohammed by several Christian sects with not less reverence than was accorded to the canonical books of the New Testament, and on some points their state-

* Southey has arrayed this fiction with the charms of poetry:

"This was that most holy night,
When all created things know and adore
The Power that made them; insects, beasts, and birds,
The water-dwellers, herbs, and trees, and stones,
Yea, earth and ocean, and the infinite heaven
With all its worlds. Man only does not know
The universal sabbath, does not join
With Nature in her homage. Yet the prayer
Flows from the righteous with intenser love,
A holier calm succeeds, and sweeter dreams
Visit the slumbers of the penitent."

Thalaba.

† Neale's Moham. System, 64.

ments were adopted in preference to the express and direct testimony of the Evangelists. In the very first century, while St. John was yet alive, Cerinthus and others taught that the crucifixion and resurrection were a mere delusion, and that God had baffled the malice of the Jews by substituting another person to be sacrificed instead of Christ.* The heretics, who promulgated this and similar errors in the sixth and seventh centuries, openly accused the orthodox clergy of falsifying the apostolical writings; a calumny which Mohammed has repeated: the Ebionites went so far as to reject every gospel but their own, in which the divinity of Christ was denied as distinctly as it is in the Koran; and the followers of Maní asserted that the promise of a Comforter had been distorted, to prevent the world from discovering that it was their teacher, and not the Holy Spirit, whom Christ had promised to console his followers. Mohammed adopted Maní's claim, and asserted that Christ had predicted him as his successor in the prophetical mission by name, but that the clergy had altered the word from *Paraclyte*, which, like the name Mohammed, signifies "the celebrated one," to *Paraclete*, which means "the Comforter."† The opinions which the Koran sets

* Koran, chap. iv.; and Maracci's Commentary, p. 173.

† Koran, chap. lxi.; and Maracci's Commentary, p. 720. See also Maracci's Prodromus, part i. ch. vi.

forth respecting the nature of Christ are precisely the same as those taught by the Cerinthians, the Arians, and other heresies, which had spread very widely; and an Arian who became a Mohammedan had only to add one article to his creed,—a recognition of the prophetical character of Mohammed. It is true that Mohammedanism has been more permanent than Arianism, but this has arisen from the circumstances of Mohammed's position; he was a political as well as a religious reformer, and he was thus enabled to identify his religion with the state. In every country where Mohammedanism prevails, it has been invested with the same elements of strength which for centuries ensured the permanence of Roman polytheism; it is so intimately blended with all civil institutions and all social usages, that they must stand or fall together.

We have seen that the Christian heresiarchs may, to a very considerable extent, be regarded as the precursors of Mohammed; and we have shown the strong probability that Arianism, in some or other of its varied forms, had numerous followers both in Western Africa and in Spain itself at the time of the Saracenic invasion. It must also be remarked, that Mohammedanism, when first promulgated, bore a much closer resemblance to Arian Christianity than it does at present. The religious systems of the Turks, and

still more of the Persians,* bear about the same relation to the Koran, that Rabbinism and Talmudism do to the Pentateuch; Mohammed would have nearly as much difficulty in recognizing the one, as Moses the other. A transition from one creed to another, which now appears difficult and unnatural, in the seventh and eighth centuries would have been an almost imperceptible change.

There can be no reason for rejecting the universal evidence of the Arabian historians, that Ilyán, lord of Ceuta, though a Christian, instigated the Saracens to undertake the conquest of Spain. There is just as little difficulty in believing that he became a convert to Mohammedanism; for, if he was an Arian, he must have been already much nearer to the creed of the Koran than to the standard of orthodoxy established by the council of Toledo. He proposed the invasion to the renowned emir, Músa Ebn Nosseir, who united the political wisdom of a statesman to the military skill of a general. Músa immediately wrote to the reigning khaliph, Al Walíd, a letter to the following effect: "I have reduced to thy sway, O commander of the faithful, the cities and

* Professor Lee notices how nearly the creed of the Shíahs agrees with that of the Roman Catholics. Both have their queen of heaven: the Catholic, in the Virgin; the Shíah, in Fatima the daughter of Mohammed. The saints of both communions can work miracles. Both have their pilgrimages, their reliques, their hermits, and their ascetics.—Lee, p. 349.

the tribes of Derar, Záb, and Mazmúd; and the savage Berber is become thy subject and friend.* The sacred banner of our prophet floats from the lofty towers of Tangiers; and from hence to the shores of Andalúz,† a narrow strait is all that opposes the zeal of the Moslemim and the conquerors of Africa." The khaliph replied, "Let the country be first explored by light troops, to overrun it and bring thee news of what it contains; be prudent, and do not allow the Moslems to be lost in an ocean of dangers and horrors." Músa wrote back, "It is not an ocean, but only a narrow channel, whose shores are everywhere distinct to the eye." "Never mind," answered Al Walíd; "even if it be so, let the country be first explored."

Ilyán was entrusted with the command of the

* The Western Africans were always considered as mere barbarians at the court of the khaliphs; and long after the conquest, the name of Mogrebbin, or Western Arab, was used as a term of reproach. It is related, that Harún-Er-Rashíd, the well-known hero of the Arabian Nights, once said to a Mogrebbin, "Is it not true, friend, that the world is a large bird of which thy western country is the tail?" The other instantly replied, "It is true, O Khaliph, but the bird is a peacock."—Moham. Dyn. i. 252.

† Andalúz is the name given by the Arabs to the whole of the Spanish peninsula, being obviously a corruption of Vandalusia, or "the country of the Vandals." D'Herbelot, however, insists that the name was derived from an old Arabic word, Handalúz, which signifies the region of the setting sun. To support this etymology, he asserts that the Arabs were ignorant of the Vandals; forgetting that they possessed the principal seaports of Western Africa at the time of the Saracenic invasion.

first experimental invasion: his forces, consisting only of his own vassals and followers, were conveyed across the strait in merchant-vessels* fitted out from the port of Ceuta; he effected a landing on the coast of Algeziras, whence he overran the country, and, after killing and making a number of captives, he and his companions re-

* Señor Gayangos very plausibly conjectures that Ilyán has been described by some Arabian authors as a merchant, in consequence of his having employed these ships to transport his forces into Spain. Ebn-al-Kuttiya, a writer of the tenth century, descended in the female line from the Gothic kings of Spain, gives the following curious account of Ilwán, to explain the cause of his enmity to Roderic, his treason to the Goths, and his alliance with the Saracens. "Now, the cause of Tárik's entering Andaluz was this: A foreign merchant, whose name was Ilyán, was in the habit of crossing from Andaluz to the country of the Berbers. The city of Tangiers was his residence, and he ruled it as master; the inhabitants professed the Christian religion. . . . . This merchant used to bring Roderic horses, hawks, and other productions of those countries. It happened, however, that the wife of the merchant came to die, leaving him one daughter of great beauty; and Roderic having commanded him to repair to Africa, he excused himself with his wife's death, and having no one to entrust with the care of his daughter while he was absent; upon which the king ordered that she should be lodged in his own palace. But Roderic's eye having rested on her, he was taken in love with her charms, and he obtained the gratification of his wishes. Upon the return of Ilyán to court, the girl apprised him of what had taken place, and Ilyán said to Roderic, "I have in store for thee horses and hawks such as thou never sawest before in thy life." He then asked his permission to take away his daughter with him; and, his request being granted, Roderic suffered her to depart, after loading her with presents and money. Ilyán then went to see Tárik," &c.—Moham. Dynas. i. 514.

turned safe to Africa on the following day.* Encouraged by Ilyán's report, Músa sent out a second exploring expedition under the command of one of his freedmen, a Berber named Tárif Abú Zorah: this chief effected a landing on "the green island," which received from him the name of the peninsula of Tarifa; he obtained a great booty, and took a great number of captives, whose exquisite beauty greatly surprised Músa and his entire court.† These successes encouraged Músa to prepare for the regular conquest of Spain: an army of seven thousand men, consisting chiefly of Berbers, was speedily levied, and placed under the command of Tárik Ebn-Zeyad, a native of Hamadan in Persia, who had risen from servitude to high rank by the mere force of his abilities. Some difficulty was felt in procuring the means of transport; four merchant-vessels, supplied by Ilyán, were all that could be procured, and they crossed and re-crossed until all the invaders were landed.‡ During the voyage, Tárik informed

* Ilyán's preliminary expedition was a mere predatory incursion, and is not noticed in the Spanish chronicles.

† Señor Gayangos fixes the date of this invasion in the end of September, A.D. 710; and notices the confusion which has been caused by many modern historians mistaking Tárif the Berber for Tárik the Persian, who commanded in the great invasion, but had no share in the preliminary enterprises.

‡ It is not easy to account for this deficiency of shipping, which is noticed both by the Spanish and Arabian historians; but it serves to explain the difficulty found in fixing the precise

his followers that he had been favoured by Heaven with a dream or vision, which had given him the fullest assurances of success: he had seen the prophet Mohammed surrounded by those holy saints and faithful companions who had adhered to his cause while he was an exile in Medina; they stood close by his couch with their swords unsheathed and their bows bent, and he had heard the prophet say, "Take courage, O Tárik, and accomplish what thou art destined to perform!" He then saw the prophet and his companions entering Spain, as if to herald the way for the faithful followers of Islám.*

Tárik effected a landing under the rocks of Mount Calpe, where, probably, no enemy was expected; he occupied the lofty promontory of Calpe, which has ever since borne his name.† From this fastness he sent out detachments, which ravaged the surrounding country and kept the whole south of Spain in constant alarm. The enthusiasm of his followers was greatly strengthened by a second appeal to their superstitions. A woman from Algeziras, probably suborned for the purpose, presented herself before Tárik at the head of his army,

day of Tárik's landing, which took place during the summer of 711.

* Mohammed called his religion Islám, which signifies "resignation," because the chief tenet which it inculcates is perfect submission to the will of God.

† Gebel-Tárik (the mountain of Tárik), corrupted by Europeans into Gibraltar.

and addressed him in the following words: "Thou must know, O stranger, that I had once a husband who had the knowledge of future events; and I have repeatedly heard him say to the people of this country that a foreign general would come to this island* and subject it to his arms. He described him to me as a man of prominent forehead, and such I see is thine: he told me, also, that the individual designated by the prophecy would have a black mole, covered with hair, on his left shoulder.† Now, if thou hast such a mark on thy body, thou art undoubtedly the person intended." When Tárik heard the old woman's reasoning, he immediately laid his shoulder bare; and the mark being found, as predicted, upon the left one, both he and his companions were filled with delight at the good omen.‡

Theodomir,§ a brave Goth, who governed the south of Spain, assembled an army to check the progress of the Saracens; but his forces were routed, and his soldiers so disheartened that they refused to keep the field. He therefore sent pressing messages to Roderic, informing him of the dangers to which the kingdom was exposed;

* The entire Spanish peninsula is usually called the *island* of Andaluz by Arabian writers.

† This sign is regarded as a sure omen of good-luck by all the Orientals. ‡ Moham. Dyn. i. 267.

§ There is great discrepancy in the accounts given of the Gothic general; by some he is named Sancho, by others Iñigo. Isidore however, and most of the Arabians, agree in calling him Theodomir.

and, at the same time, wrote him a letter to the following effect: "This, our land, has been invaded by people whose name, country, and origin are unknown to me; I cannot even tell whence they came—whether they fell from the skies, or sprung from the earth." Other writers add the romantic tale, that Theodomir visited the Saracenic camp to inquire the cause of the invasion; and that Tárik ordered his men to cut up some dead bodies and cook them in large cauldrons, for the purpose of persuading the Goth that the Moslems were actually cannibals. During the night the human flesh was removed and buried, and beef and mutton dressed in its stead; but Theodomir, unconscious of the change, when he saw the Saracens taking their morning's repast, was filled with horror, and was persuaded that these dreadful enemies fed on the bodies of the slain.* On his return, he wrote to his master, "Thy kingdom has been invaded by a nation of people who feed upon the flesh of the slain; their description is the same as that found by thee in the sealed palace: they have set fire to their vessels, and seem determined either to conquer or perish."†

* In the metrical life of Richard Cœur de Lion, published in Ellis's Specimens of Romance, that monarch is stated to have served up the heads of some emirs, whom he had slain, to the ambassadors of Salah-ed-din, who were filled with horror when they recognized the features of their old associates on the smoking chargers placed before them.

† Moham. Dynast. i., Append. XLVII.

Roderic was at this moment engaged in suppressing a revolt of the Basques in the neighbourhood of Pampeluna: on receiving Theodomir's letter, he marched immediately to Cordova, whence he issued orders for the Gothic nobles to assemble their vassals and haste to join him in the field. Amongst others, he summoned the sons of Witiza, whose lives he had spared after he had dethroned their father; they promised obedience, although they had already concluded a treaty with Tárik, by means of Ilyán, and had promised to support him with all their forces, on condition of being restored to their father's throne. The numerical superiority of the army which Roderic led against the invaders was very great;* but there was disaffection in his ranks, and even those who had not made terms with the invaders were not ardent in the support of a usurper. "This wretch," said they, "has, by force, taken possession of the throne, to which he is not justly entitled; for not only he does not belong to the royal family, but he was once one of our meanest menials: we do not know how far he may carry his wicked intentions against us. There is no doubt but that Tárik's followers do not intend to settle in the country: their only wish is to fill

* According to the best authorities, Roderic had about ninety thousand soldiers, whilst the followers of Tárik, including the reinforcements recently received from Africa, did not exceed twelve thousand. Ebn-Khaldun, however, reduces the amount of the Gothic army to forty thousand.

their hands with spoil, and then return. Let us, then, as soon as the battle is engaged, give way, and leave the usurper alone to fight the strangers, who will soon deliver us from him; and, when they shall be gone, we can place on the throne him who best deserves it."* Most of the nobles concurred in these sentiments, and it was agreed that the plan should be put into execution: the two sons of Witiza, whom Roderic had appointed to the command of the left and right wings of his army, were among the chief conspirators; and they were zealously supported by their uncle Oppas, archbishop of Toledo, who, like many other of the Spanish prelates, held military rank in the army.†

The armies met on the bank of the little river Guadalete, not far from the present town of Medina-Sidonia. In the very commencement of the engagement the conspirators led their forces over to the side of the invaders, and Roderic was deserted by all but his body-guard. Surrounded by a faithful few, he made a brave and protracted resistance; but he was at length overpowered by numbers, and suddenly disappeared. As his celebrated horse Orelia,‡ his upper garment and buskins covered with pearls and precious stones, were found on the bank of the river Guadalete, and as no certain intelligence of his fate was afterwards received, it was

* Moham. Dynast. i. 270. † Ib. i. 545.

‡ Orelia, the courser of Don Roderic, was celebrated for his speed and form; he is frequently mentioned in the romances, and

supposed that he was drowned passing the river.* The Arab writers, however, assert that he was slain on the field by Tárik himself; and that his head, having been cut off, was sent to Músa, and transmitted by him as an appropriate present to the khaliph. On the other hand, the Spanish romances declare that Roderic escaped from the field, and

also by Cervantes. Southey's description of the steed abandoned by its master, after the imaginary battle of Sella, is one of the finest passages in his neglected epic:

Upon the banks
Of Sella was Orelia found, his legs
And flanks incarnadined; his poitrel smear'd
With froth, and foam, and gore; his silver mane
Sprinkled with blood, which hung on every hair,
Aspersed like dew-drops: trembling there he stood,
Faint from the toil:—there, he at times sent forth
His tremulous voice, far-echoing, loud and shrill,
A frequent anxious cry, with which he seem'd
To call the master whom he loved so well,
And who had thus again forsaken him.

SOUTHEY'S *Roderic.*

* Sir Walter Scott has made a noble use of this incident in his Vision of Don Roderic; the king is supposed to witness the prophetic vision of the battle in "the fatal palace."

"They come! they come! I see the groaning lands
White with the turbans of each Arab horde;
Swart Zara joins her unbelieving bands,
Alla and Mahomet their battle-word;
The choice they yield, the Koran or the sword.—
See how the Christians rush to arms amain!—
In yonder shout the voice of conflict roar'd,
The shadowy hosts are closing on the plain,
Now God and St. Jago strike for the good cause of Spain!

"By

passed a long life of extraordinary penances as an anchorite in a rocky cell on the coast of Portugal.*

Immense spoils were gained by the victorious Saracens: the princes and great men of the Goths who fell, were distinguished by the massive gold rings which they had on their fingers; those of an inferior order wore silver, and their vassals had rings of brass. Intelligence of the glorious victory that had been gained, and the wealth which the soldiers had acquired, spread rapidly through Northern Africa; numbers flocked to join Tárik from all quarters, and they crossed the sea in every bark

"By heaven! the Moors prevail; the Christians yield!—
Their coward leader gives for flight the sign!
The sceptred craven mounts to quit the field—
Is not yon steed Orelia?—Yes, 'tis mine,
But never was she turn'd from battle-line.
Lo! where the recreant spurs o'er stock and stone!
Curses pursue the wretch, and wrath divine!
Rivers ingulf him!"—"Hush!" in shuddering tone
The prelate said, "rash prince, the vision'd form's thine own."

Just then a torrent cross'd the flier's course:
The dangerous ford the kingly likeness tried,
But the deep eddies whelm'd both man and horse,
Swept like benighted peasant down the tide.
And the proud Moslemah spread far and wide
As numerous as their native locust band;
Berber and Ismäel's sons the spoil divide,
With naked scimitars mete out the land,
And, for the bondman base, the free-born natives brand.

* The tale of Roderic's escape, and subsequent life of penance at Viséo in Portugal, was first advanced by Sebastian of Salamanca, a monkish writer of the tenth century.

or vessel which they could find. The strength of the invaders thus became so great that the Christians abandoned the open country, and either shut themselves up in castles and fortresses, or fled to the mountains. Tárik captured several important places with little difficulty; nor did he meet any obstinate resistance until he besieged Ezija, where the best troops belonging to Roderic's defeated army had found a shelter. The Saracens suffered very severely in their attempts to carry the city by assault, but by chance the governor was taken prisoner by Tárik. He obtained his life on condition of surrendering the city, but security of life and property was guaranteed to the inhabitants on payment of the usual tribute. It was not until after the capture of Ezija that the Goths began to suspect the Saracens of a design to occupy the country; it filled them with dismay, and the disaffected nobles began to repent bitterly of their treachery to the unfortunate Roderic. It was, however, too late to remedy the disaster: no bond of union could be formed between the Gothic nobles; they dispersed in different directions, and a few only of the principal people repaired to the capital city, Toledo, with the intention of protracting resistance within its walls.*

Ilyán, who had been Tárik's principal adviser

* Makkarí says that the panic was greatly increased by the general belief that the Moslems fed on human flesh. See before, page 124.

during the campaign, earnestly recommended an immediate march to Toledo, before the Goths could recover from their panic and collect forces for a new campaign. Tárik, in compliance with this prudent advice, led the principal division of his forces towards the capital, and sent the remainder of his forces in divisions against places of less importance. Cordova lay on the road to Toledo, and the charge of besieging this important place was entrusted to a Greek renegade named Mugheyth. Taking advantage of a dark and stormy night, the Saracens scaled the walls of Cordova; but the Christians fled to a church which was supplied with water by a spring at the foot of a neighbouring mountain, where they maintained themselves with great firmness. The singular incident by which the Moslems finally became masters of this church is thus related by the Arabian writers; it has every appearance of being a legendary tale, though it is certainly within the range of possibility. The Saracen leader had a black slave of tried courage and fortitude, whom he directed to hide himself at night in a garden near the church, for the purpose of intercepting some straggler who might give information of the state of the garrison. The negro did as he was ordered; but, when the morn was beginning to dawn, he was tempted to forget caution by some rich fruits which grew in the garden, and climbed one of the trees in order to pluck some and satisfy his appetite. In this situation he was

seen by some of the soldiers in the church, who sallied out, surrounded the tree, and compelled him to come down and yield himself a prisoner. The Christians, who had never seen a negro before, were filled with fright and astonishment when he descended; after some consultation, they came to the unanimous conclusion that his colour was artificial, and dragged him to the conduit which supplied the church with water, in order to efface the stain. Several of the stoutest soldiers, having armed themselves with hard brushes, commenced scrubbing the poor black with all their might and main; until he, tortured by the operation, explained to them, but not without difficulty, that his colour was as natural as their own. After having been kept a prisoner for about seven days, the negro made his escape; and, after informing Mugheyth of his adventures, pointed out the direction of the subterranean conduit which supplied the garrison with water. Expert persons were employed to discover the conduit; it was stopped up: the church was from that moment deprived of water, and the garrison doomed to death.* The gallant defenders of the church, however, still refused to surrender; but at length the edifice was fired above their heads, and they perished in the flames, which they had no longer the means of extinguishing. The governor of Cordova was taken prisoner; Mugheyth spared his life with the intention of presenting him to the khaliph,

* Moham. Dynast. i. 279.

Al Walíd, on his return to the East, as he was the only prisoner of the royal blood of the Goths taken during the conquest, the rest having either escaped to the mountains, or surrendered on terms which secured them their liberty. However, Mugheyth was unable to accomplish his purpose: as he passed through Africa, Músa insisted on being allowed to present the royal captive to his master; and, finding that he could not prevail on Mugheyth to relinquish his prize, he rushed upon the unhappy captive, and slew him in the very presence of his owner. Malaga and Granada were taken at the same time by other detachments of the invading army, and the custody of the captured citizens was in all cases entrusted to Jewish garrisons. "They were trusted," says Makkari, "in preference to the Christians, on account of their hatred and animosity to the latter." In another place he adds, "This practice became almost general in the succeeding years; for, whenever the Moslems conquered a town, it was left in custody of the Jews with only a few Moslems, the rest of the army proceeding to new conquests; and, where Jews were deficient, a proportionably greater number of Moslems was left in charge."*

* This practice of garrisoning the conquered cities with Jews, which was almost universally observed by the invaders, would of itself lead to a strong suspicion that there had been a previous understanding between them and the Berbers under the orders of Tárik; but, as we have already mentioned, there is abundant

Theodomir, the first great opponent of the invaders, collected a large body of the fugitive Goths in Murcia, and once more hazarded a battle in Murcia; he was defeated with great loss, and, most of his men being slain, he fled with a few followers to Oribuela. As his forces were insufficient to garrison the wall, he is said to have ordered the women to let their hair loose, to arm themselves with bows, and to appear on the walls, as if they were so many warriors prepared for battle. The Moslems, deceived by this stratagem, offered more favourable terms of capitulation than they would otherwise have granted; they were accepted by Theodomir, and, though the Moors were indignant at being so easily duped, they faithfully observed the terms of the treaty.* Among the cities which defended themselves to the last, and were therefore laid waste with fire and sword by the conquerors, Auria is particularly noticed by the Spanish chroniclers: it was taken by storm; no mercy was shown to age, or sex, or station; the city became the charnel-house of all its citizens, and its edifices

evidence to show that the persecuting and infamous edicts of the councils of Toledo had driven them to seek aid from the tribes of North-western Africa even before the Saracenic invasion.

* According to another version of the legend, Theodomir had become a renegade, and commanded the troops engaged in the siege of Oribuela; and it was on him the stratagem was practised of which in the text he is said to have been the author.

levelled over their bodies became their universal sepulchre. *

While these cities were being subdued, Tárik slowly advanced towards Toledo, contrary to the commands of Músa, who, on hearing of his success in the battle on the banks of the Guadalete, sent him orders not to advance, designing to reserve the honour of conquering Spain for himself. Tárik, however, resolved to complete what he had begun, and marched towards the Gothic metropolis, which was abandoned at his approach. According to the Christian chronicles, Sindered, the archbishop of Toledo, perceiving that the garrison was too weak to make effective resistance, fled

* Southey finely describes the effect produced by the recent ruins of Auria on his imaginary pilgrim:

"But when now,
Beyond Amoya's tributary tide,
He came where Minho rolled its ampler stream
By Auria's ancient walls, fresh horrors met
His startled view; for prostrate in the dust
Those walls were laid, and towers and temples stood
Tottering in frightful ruins, as the flame
Had left them, black and bare: and through the streets,
All with the recent wreck of war bestrewn,
Helmet and turban, scimitar and sword,
Christian and Moor in death promiscuous lay,
Each where they fell; and blood-flakes, parched and cracked,
Like the dry slime of some receding flood;
And half-burnt bodies, which allur'd from far
The wolf and raven, and to impious food
Tempted the houseless dog.

Roderic, III.

with the treasures, relics, and ornaments of the church into Galicia;* and the principal inhabitants, disheartened by the removal of the sacred deposit, which they regarded as the palladium of their protection, hastened to follow his example. "The archbishop of Toledo," says Morales, "with a holy foresight, collected the sacred relics which he could, and the most precious books of his own church and of others, determining to carry them all into the Asturias, in order that the holy relics might not be profaned or treated with little reverence by the infidels; and that the books of the Holy Scriptures and of the ecclesiastical offices, and the works of our holy doctors, might not be lost: and, although many relics are mentioned which the archbishop then carried from Toledo, especial mention is made of a holy ark, full of many and most remarkable relics, which, through divers chances and dangers, had been brought from Jerusalem to Toledo. † It is also

* The relics and the written works of saints,
Toledo's choicest treasure, prized beyond
All wealth, their living and their dead remains;
These to the mountain-fastnesses he bore
Of unsubdued Cantabria, there deposed
One day to be the boast of yet unbuilt
Oviedo, and the dear idolatry
Of multitudes unborn.
Roderic, XVIII.

† Morales elsewhere describes the contents of this holy ark, or *Camara* Santa: "Know then that herein is a great part of

expressly said that the cope which our Lady gave to St. Ildefonso was then carried to the Asturias with other relics; and, being so capital a relic, it was a worthy thing to write of it thus particularly. Of the sacred books which were saved at that time, there are specified the Holy Scriptures, the Councils, the works of St. Isidore and of St. Ildefonso, and of St. Julian the archbishop of Toledo; and as there is at this day in the church of Oviedo that holy ark, together with many other of the relics which were then removed, so do I verily believe that there are in the library of that church three or four books of those which were

the wood or cross of our Lord; of his garment, for which they cast lots; of the blessed bread whereof he ate at the supper; of his linen, of the holy handkerchief (the Sudarium), and of his most holy blood; of the holy ground which he then trod with his holy feet; of the garments of his mother the Virgin Mary, and also of her milk, which is a great wonder. With these, also, there are many capital relics of saints, whose names we shall write here as we can; St. Peter, St. Thomas, St. Bartholomew. Bones of the prophets, and of all the apostles, and of many other saints whose names are only known to the wisdom of God." (MORALES, xiii. 40.) It is singular that the worthy father, after this display of credulity, should have shown any scepticism respecting several other relics in the church of Oviedo: he omits in his chronicle, but doubtingly records in his journal, such wondrous relics as a bit of Tobit's fish, and of Samson's honeycomb, a portion of Moses's rod, a large piece of St. Bartholomew's skin, and the sole of St. Peter's shoe! With all his superstition, Morales was a pious and good man, and his writings are of the highest value to the antiquarian and historian.

then brought from Toledo. I am led to this belief" (continues Morales) "by seeing that they are written in a form of Gothic letters, which, being compared with writings six hundred years old, are without doubt much older, and of characters so different, that they may well be attributed to the times of the Goths. One is a volume of the Councils, another is a *Santoral*, another contains the books of St. Isidore *de Naturis Rerum*, with other works of other authors; and there are also some leaves of a Bible. To put these relics in greater security, and avoid the danger of the Moors, they hid them in a cave, and in a sort of deep pit therein, two leagues from the city of Oviedo (which was not at that time built), in a mountain which was for that reason called Montesacro. It is now, by a slight corruption, called Monsagro; and the people of that country hold the cave in great veneration, and a great *romery*, or pilgrimage, is made on St. Magdalen's day." *

The Arabian writers assert that Tárik, notwithstanding the precautions of the archbishop, obtained rich and numerous spoils in Toledo; and the list which they give is to the full as curious as that of the treasures rescued, which we have just extracted. Twenty-five gold crowns, one for each of the Gothic monarchs who had reigned in

* Morales, xii. 71.

Andalus,*—it being a custom of that nation that each of their kings should deposit in that sacred spot a gold diadem, having his name, figure, and condition, the number of children he left, the length of his life and that of his reign, engraven on it; one and twenty copies of the Pentateuch, the Gospel, the Psalms; the book of Abraham, and that of Moses; several other books containing secrets of nature and art, or treating about the manner of using plants, minerals, and living animals beneficially for man; another, which contained talismans of ancient Greek philosophers, and a collection of recipes of simples and elixirs; several gold vases filled with pearls, rubies, emeralds, topazes, and every description of precious stones; many lofty rooms filled with gold and tissue robes, and tunics of every variety of costly silk and satin, without counting gilt armour, richly set daggers and swords, bows, spears, and all kinds of offensive and defensive weapons. †

These spoils, however, did not compensate for the absence of one particular trophy, which is called in the legends "the table of Solomon:" according to Makkarí, it was of a green colour; its sides and its feet, which were three hundred

* We have already mentioned that Spain is called Andalus by the Arabs. Some authors more correctly state that the number of these crowns was twenty-seven.

† Moham. Dyn. i. 283.

and sixty-five in number, were made of solid emerald; and it was studded over with all manner of precious stones. This valuable relic had been removed from the metropolis to "the city of the table," beyond the rugged sierra which lies north of Toledo; and Tárik crossed the mountains in order to get possession of it. Success crowned his efforts; and he returned to meet Músa, who had by this time landed with a monument of victory which was valued as much as the conquest of Spain itself. Making the usual allowances for Oriental exaggeration, there is no improbability in Tárik's having taken some relic, supposed to have formed part of the plunder of the Temple of Jerusalem, which Titus is said to have brought to Rome, and which afterwards fell into the hands of the Goths when they plundered "the eternal city."

Músa having learned that Tárik was acquiring such wealth and fame, he resolved to take a share in the enterprize. He landed at Algeziras, where he was joined by some of Ilyán's * followers and a vast multitude of Jews. As he expressed a desire not to follow in the track of Tárik, his guides led him along the coast; he took with little diffi-

* This is the last time that Ilyán is mentioned in the history of the conquest; according to the Arab writers, he was permitted to retain the lordship of Ceuta during his life, but was not allowed to transmit the inheritance to his children.

culty the strong fortress of Carmona, the beautiful city of Seville, which had been the metropolis of Spain, and several towns of minor importance. Merida made a desperate resistance; the citizens cut off an entire division of the Moslems who had attempted to force a way into the town through a stone-quarry which was under the walls. The age of Músa raised the hopes of the garrison; they believed that it would be possible to protract the defence until his death, when the besieging army would disperse of its own accord. Músa, having been informed of these expectations, caused his beard and hair to be dyed with *henna*, and the Christian deputies in their successive interviews were astonished to find him appearing younger and younger every day. At length they assembled the citizens, and said, "Know ye, that we have to fight a nation of prophets, who can change their appearance at pleasure, and transform themselves into any shape they like. We have seen this king, who was an old man, become a young one; so, our advice is this, that we should go to him and grant his demands, for people like them we cannot resist.* The people assented, and the city was surrendered on honourable conditions. Among the captives was Egilona, the queen of the unfortunate Roderic; Músa kept her for about two years as a slave,

* This strange legend is recorded both in the Christian and Arab chronicles.—Moham. Dynast. i. 543.

and then gave her in marriage to his brave son Abd-al-Azíz. *

Músa, at first, threw Tárik into prison for having disobeyed his orders, but he subsequently became reconciled to the gallant general; and their joint forces soon completed the entire reduction of Spain, with the exception of the mountains of the Asturias, where a few Christians determined

* The character of this queen is nobly conceived by the author of Count Julian, a dramatic poem which contains some passages that can scarcely be surpassed in the range of English literature.

> " Beaming with virtue inaccessible
> Stood Egilona; for her lord she lived,
> And for the heavens that raised her sphere so high:
> All thoughts were on her—all beside her own.
> Negligent as the blossoms of the field
> Arrayed in candour and simplicity,
> Before her path she heard the streams of joy
> Murmur her name in all their cadences;
> Saw them in every scene, in light, in shade,
> Reflect her image; but acknowledged them
> Hers most complete when flowing from her most.
> All things in want of her, herself of none,
> Pomp and dominion lay beneath her feet
> Unfelt and unregarded: now behold
> The earthly passions war against the heavenly!
> Pride against love;—ambition and revenge
> Against devotion and compliancy.—
> Her glorious beams adversity hath blunted,
> And, coming nearer to our quiet view,
> The original clay of coarse mortality
> Hardens and flows around her."

to maintain their independence. The Arabian writers assert, that the victorious leaders invaded France, and established themselves in the south-western provinces, and that Músa meditated leading his victorious army across Europe to besiege Constantinople. In the midst of his conquests he was summoned to the court of the khaliph, where his victories had been viewed with great jealousy. He set out, after having appointed his favourite son, Abd-al-Azíz, governor of Spain, and placed his two remaining sons over the provinces of Africa. Músa's progress through Africa, Egypt, and Syria was one great triumphal procession. As he approached Damascus, he received intelligence that the khaliph, Al Walíd, was on the point of death, and, at the same time, a message from the presumptive heir to the crown, requesting him to delay his march, in order that the new reign should commence auspiciously with the announcement of the conquest of the Western World. Músa refused to comply with this suggestion; he reached the city a few days before Al Walíd expired. On the accession of the new khaliph, Suleiman, he was arrested on a charge of embezzlement, preferred against him by his old lieutenants Tárik and Mugheyth; orders were actually issued for his crucifixion, but he saved his life by the sacrifice of his entire fortune. Historians are not agreed as to Músa's subsequent career: some assert that

he was restored to the khaliph's favour; but others declare that he spent the remainder of his life in abject poverty, so that the conqueror of Spain may be regarded as the Saracen Belisarius.*

* Mohammedan Dynasties of Spain. Appendix L. &c.

CHAPTER V.

The Moors in France.—Western Europe saved from the Saracens.

We stated in the preceding chapter that Abd-al-Azíz had been entrusted with the government of Spain by his father Músa; this appointment was confirmed by the khaliph Suleiman, who further directed him to have a complete survey made of the kingdom, in order that proper arrangements might be made for the administration of justice and the collection of the revenue. Abd-al-Azíz is said to have executed his task with great ability;* he not only made himself acquainted with the state of the country, but the condition of the people, their laws, their customs, and their industrial pursuits. His conduct to the native Spaniards has been highly praised by the Christian historians;† they attribute it in a great degree to the influence of his favourite wife Égilona, who had been the queen of the unfortunate Roderic: she still retained the profession of Christianity, and was permitted by her Mohammedan

* Al-Makin, Epit. Hist. Sar.

† Mariana, vi. 27.

husband to have a crucifix, and images of the Virgin and her favourite saints, erected in her oratory. It is said by one Arabian historian,* that she actually converted her husband; but the more common account is, that she failed in her attempt, and that she then had the door of her apartment constructed so low that he could not enter it without stooping, and was thus compelled to pay involuntary homage to the sacred images.† But Egilona exerted her influence for a more questionable purpose; she wished her husband to throw off his allegiance to the khaliph, and proclaim himself independent. Abd-al-Azíz yielded to her suggestions: he removed the seat of government to Seville, the ancient metropolis of Spain, to conciliate the natives, and he admitted several Christians to a share in the administration. His designs were suspected by the Moors: a conspiracy was formed for his destruction, and he was assassinated while at prayer in the mosque which he had founded in Seville.

The successors of Abd-al-Azíz exerted themselves to complete the conquest of the peninsula but the distance of Spain from the seat of the khaliphate prevented the supreme power from exercising sufficient control over the provincial governors; ambition soon involved the Moorish

* Al-Makin, Epit. Hist. Sar.

† Bleda, 214.

chiefs in civil dissensions, and leisure was afforded to the Christians for laying the foundations of a new monarchy. Spain appears to have been at this time in a very distracted condition; the prudent regulations of Abd-al-Azíz were set aside, the Mohammedans were allowed to plunder the Christians at their discretion, and the Christians in their turn formed themselves into predatory bands which perpetrated frightful ravages in retaliation.

In the mountains of the Asturias a mingled race of Spanish Christians had combined for mutual defence: there were descendants of the ancient Cantabrians, the Romans, and the Suevians, as well as the Goths; and they chose for their leader Pelayo, who claimed descent from the ancient line of Spanish princes, as well as from the recent dynasty of the Goths.* It is doubt-

* The Biscayan or Cantabrian descent of Pelayo is a favourite theory of Spanish writers, but it rests on no better authority than the mere conjecture of Gaubays. Southey has made good use of the legend in the speech which he attributes to the bishop of Toledo when offering Pelayo the crown of Spain:

> "For sure it seems,"
> Thus saith the primate, "Heaven's high will to rear
> Upon the soil of Spain a Spanish throne,
> Restoring in thy native line, O prince,
> The sceptre to the Spaniard. Worthy son
> Of that most ancient and heroic race,
> Which with unweariable endurance still
> Hath striven against its mightier enemies,
> Roman or Carthaginian, Greek or Goth,

ful whether Don Pelayo actually assumed the royal title; but it may be regarded as certain, that he collected together the scattered elements from which the Spanish monarchy was subsequently formed. None were likely to become his subjects but those who preferred their liberty and their religion to property and ease; and hence his army, though small, was composed of men who had nerved their hearts to endure every chance of fate, and find no safety but in victory. The foundation of the new government was laid in the little province of Liebana, which is about nine leagues in length and four in breadth, occupying the table-land of the Asturian mountains; a district so fortified by nature, that its inhabitants are capable of resisting almost any number of invaders.* From thence Pelayo descended into the lower country, where he made himself master of the strong town of Gijon, which for a time became the capital of his dominions: he subsequently acquired the two Asturias and the greater part of the Biscayan provinces, where the successive invaders of Spain had always encountered the most strenuous resistance. In memory of the cradle of the mon-

So often by superior arms oppressed,
More often by superior arts beguiled;
Yet amid all its sufferings, all the waste
Of sword and fire remorselessly employed,
Unconquered and unconquerable still."

Roderic, VII.

* Les Délices de l'Espagne, par Colmenar, i. 115.

archy, the heir-apparent to the crown of Spain has always taken the title of Prince of the Asturias; and the inhabitants of the principality, even at the present day, value themselves on the superior purity of their blood, and assert that the best families of Spain trace their descent to the ancient heroes of the Asturias.*

The Moorish governor of Spain was at this time engaged in devastating France: on receiving intelligence of the revolution, he directed an army to be drawn out of the garrisons in Spain, to which he added a large division of his own forces; and he entrusted the command to Al Khâman, an officer of great experience, who had served in Spain from the beginning of the war. Oppas, the renegade archbishop of Seville, joined the Moors with a large body of cavalry, and headed the march against the fortress of freedom in the Asturian mountains. Pelayo soon learned the danger with which his infant kingdom was menaced; and, having first exhorted his subjects to address themselves to God for protection and aid, he took every precaution necessary to ensure a successful defence. The place he chose for this decisive struggle was the memorable Vale of Covadonga,†

* Memoria al Rey Philipe IV., par R. O. Alvarez de las Asturias.

† The importance of the battle of Covadonga is not overrated by the Spanish historians; it was the crisis of Christianity in Western Europe, for it destroyed the cowardly belief in the invincibility of the Saracens, which had spread not only through

which Southey has graphically described, from a combination and comparison of the Spanish writers, in the following picturesque passage:

> The ascending vale,
> Long straitened by the narrowing mountains, here
> Was closed. In front, a rock abrupt and bare
> Stood eminent, in height exceeding far
> All edifice of human power, by king
> Or caliph, or barbaric sultan rear'd,
> Or mightier tyrants of the world of old,
> Assyrian or Egyptian, in their pride;
> Yet far above, beyond the reach of sight,
> Swell after swell, the heathery mountain rose.
> Here, in two sources, from the living rock,
> The everlasting springs of Deva gushed.
> Upon a smooth and grassy plot below,
> By Nature there as for an altar drest,
> They joined their sister stream, which from the earth
> Welled silently. In such a scene rude man,
> With pardonable error, might have knelt,
> Feeling a present Deity, and made
> His offering to the fountain-nymph devout.
> The arching rock disclosed above the springs
> A cave, where hugest son of giant birth
> That e'er of old in forest of romance
> 'Gainst knights and ladies waged discourteous war,
> Erect within the portal might have stood.
> The broken stone allowed for hand and foot
> No difficult ascent, above the base
> In height a tall man's stature, measured thrice!

In this strait Pelayo disposed his few but gallant forces; they were concealed amid the hanging

Spain, but had extended to Gaul, Italy, and Germany: we therefore deem it a duty, as we feel it a pleasure, to collect every legendary and historical particular which may tend to illustrate so important an engagement.

woods and inaccessible cliffs for about a mile at each side of the valley: by each division were piled immense heaps of stones and trunks of trees, ready to be precipitated into the narrow pass below as soon as the predetermined signal should be given. In the mean time Al-Khâman passed the Rio Buegna, and slowly advanced through the valleys, his army being much encumbered by heavy baggage; it being necessary to bring a large supply of provision, as the line of march lay over a country naturally desert, and now further devastated by war. Having traversed the mountain Anseba, situated in front of the defiles of Covadonga, without encountering any resistance, they began to believe that the Christians were disheartened; and Al-Khâman sent forward the renegade Oppas to summon Pelayo to surrender.* These proposals were rejected with contempt; Pelayo declared that he and his subjects were resolved to live or die free.

The task of exploring the country through which the Saracen army advanced had been hitherto entrusted to the light cavalry of Oppas, but the rugged defiles prevented the horsemen from executing this duty so perfectly as they had hitherto done; and it has been suggested, with great pro-

* Mariana, vii. — The Spanish historian has indulged his classic taste by inserting very eloquent speeches on both sides: it is needless to add, that they are pure fabrication, and, what is worse, that they are characteristic neither of the individuals nor the age.

bability, that the mountain mists, so common in the Asturias, may have helped to conceal the preparations of the Christians. Unsuspicious of dangers, the Moorish columns poured into the defiles, believing that they would only have to deal with the handful of men which their scouts had dimly discovered at the upper end of the pass. The last battalion of the infantry had entered the pass as Oppas's foremost riders drew bridle before the wall of rock underneath the cave. At this moment Pelayo appeared in front of the cave, bearing the oaken cross destined to be the signal for the regeneration of Spain. He waved it on high, and, at the instant, the Christians, concealed along the rugged sides of the pass, sprang to their appointed posts; the piles of rocks, trees, and stones were rolled down on the heads of the devoted Saracens, mingled with arrows, darts, and bullets from Balearic slings. Every missile told in the crowded ranks; while the darts and javelins hurled by the Moors, rebounding from rocks, fell back upon themselves and increased their confusion. The leading squadrons rushed back upon the rear; horse and foot became mingled together; while the Christians, from the heights, gave not one moment's respite to their enemies, but plied them with incessant discharges. Al-Khâman fell among the first; Oppas, hurled wounded from his steed, was reserved to meet an ignominious and merited death from his countrymen; their followers fell by thousands, without being able to strike

a blow; and, of the miserable remnant which escaped, more than half perished on the following day by the sudden overflowing of the river Deva.*

A subsequent victory obtained over the Moors in the valley of Olalles, about three leagues below the place where the city of Oviedo now stands, confirmed the security of Pelayo's little kingdom. The Saracens discovered the peril of leading armies into the Asturian mountains; and their chiefs had little inclination to make expeditions into a land, where, even if successful, they could only hope to obtain a trifling booty, and were certain to purchase it at a far greater expenditure of blood and treasure than it was worth. The rich provinces of Southern Gaul offered far greater temptations to predatory

* Rod. Tol. de Rebus Hispan. iv.—"The battle of Covadonga is one of the great miracles of Spanish history. It was asserted for many centuries without contradiction, and is still believed by the people, that, when the Moors attacked Pelayo in the cave, the weapons were turned back upon themselves; that the Virgin Mary appeared in the clouds, and that part of a mountain fell upon the infidels and crushed those who were flying from destruction."—Southey's Rod. vol. ii., note, p. 231. Well might the poet say,

> No holier spot than Covadonga Spain
> Boasts in her wide extent, though all her realms
> Be with the noblest blood of martyrdom
> In elder or in later days enriched,
> And glorified with tales of heavenly aid
> By many a miracle made manifest;
> Nor in the heroic annals of her fame
> Doth she show forth a scene of more renown.
>
> *Roderic*, XVI.

warriors, and Pelayo was permitted to consolidate his kingdom in comparative quiet. Numbers of Christians secretly escaped from the Moorish provinces to join their brethren in the mountains; and these refugees were generally persons of the better class, for they were the most exposed to the cruelties and extortions of the avaricious Moors.*

Our attention must now be directed to a revolution in the khaliphate, which produced a very important change in the relations between the Christians and the Saracens. On the death of Mohammed, the claims of his cousin and son-in-law Ali were set aside, though it is generally believed that the prophet had made an express declaration in his favour a little before his death. The peaceful character of Ali had, however, rendered him unpopular in the army; and he had, besides, a powerful enemy in Ayesha, the prophet's favourite wife, whose hatred he had provoked by some insinuations against her chastity.† As she had attended her husband in his sickness, she had an opportunity of suppressing any declaration he might have made respecting Ali; and her subsequent conduct proves that she was not very scrupulous in employing the means most likely to gratify her revenge. She was influenced by another motive, in

* Luc. Tudens. Chron.

† The facts in this summary of Moslem history are principally taken from Reinaud's admirable work on the Mohammedan Collection of the Duc de Blaças.

addition to her hatred of Ali; she was exceedingly jealous of his wife Fatima, her own step-daughter, whom she regarded as her rival in influence and dignity. Chiefly through her influence, Abu Bekr, Omar, and Othman were successively raised to the khaliphate; and it was not until the death of Othman by the hands of a tumultuous soldiery that Ali was proclaimed the successor of his father-in-law. The arts of Ayesha raised an insurrection against Ali in Arabia; and it was scarcely quelled, when a more dangerous revolt broke out in Syria, headed by Moáwiyah, the governor of that province. Ali, in the midst of victory, was compelled by his army to enter into negotiations; and, before the disputed succession could be arranged, he fell by the hand of an assassin.* On the death of Ali, his son Hassan was invested with the spiritual dignity of the khaliphate, the temporal power being usurped by Moáwiyah; but that prince, fearing that his throne would not be secure while any of

* Such was the fanaticism of the times that a Mohammedan poet dared to celebrate the detestable murder of this virtuous sovereign in lines to the following effect:

O God! how truly noble was the deed,
Which from a wicked king thy chosen freed!
O worthy blow, dealt by a noble hand!
O stroke, which Heaven's high favour must command!
To thee, avenger! humbly shall I pray
When called to answer at the judgment day;
Thy glorious deed shall then with weight prevail,
And turn the balance of the awful scale.

TAYLOR'S *Moham.* 192.

Ali's family remained alive, caused Hassan to be poisoned, and had his brother Hossein, with his children, murdered on the plains of Kerbela. By this crime Moáwiyah was enabled to found the Ommiade dynasty, which reigned for eighty-eight years at Damascus.

The Abassides, descended from Al Abbás, the uncle of Mohammed, were naturally indignant at the usurpation of the Ommiades, but it was long before they succeeded in forming such a party as would give them a reasonable chance of success in a struggle for empire. The black standard of their race was first raised in Khorassan; and so many partisans joined the insurgents, that their leader, Abu 'l Abbás al Saffah, compelled the Ommiade khaliph to fly into Egypt, where he was overtaken and slain. Al Saffah took possession of the vacant throne and founded the dynasty of the Abassides, whose khaliphate at Bagdad forms the most brilliant period of Oriental history. The supporters of "the white banner," the cognizance of the Ommiades, for a considerable time maintained a desperate resistance; but they were successively crushed, and the empire of Al Saffah or "The Bloody," was firmly established. He soon proved that he merited his terrible name. Ninety members of the Ommiade family were living at Damascus after their submission, under what they believed the safe protection of Abdallah-Ebn-Ali, the uncle of the khaliph. One day, when they were all as-

sembled at a feast to which they had been invited by the governor, a poet, according to a preconcerted arrangement, presented himself before Abdallah, and recited some verses enumerating the crimes of the house of Moáwiyah, calling for vengeance on their devoted heads, and pointing out the dangers to which their existence exposed the house of Abbás. "God has cast them down," he exclaimed; "why dost not thou trample upon them?" This abominable exhortation fell upon willing ears; Abdallah gave the signal to the executioners, whom he had already prepared, and ordered the ninety guests to be beaten to death with clubs in his presence. When the last had fainted under the hands of the executioner, he ordered the bodies of the dead and dying to be piled together, and carpets to be thrown over the ghastly heap. He then, with the rest of his guests, ascended this horrible platform, and there they revelled in a gorgeous banquet, careless of the groans and the agony below! One of the proscribed race, Abd-er-Rahman Ebn Moáwiyah, received timely warning of his danger, and fled for safety to the Bedouins of Egypt: amongst them he led the life of a "hunted wanderer," the khaliph having set a large price upon his head.*

Abd-er-Rahman was living with the sheikh of the Zenate tribe, when he received an invitation from the Saracens of Spain to come and put an end to the anarchy which prevailed amongst them

* Al Makin, Hist. Sar.

in consequence of the civil wars which had arisen between the partisans of the white and the black banner. He did not hesitate to accept this invitation. "Go, my son," said the old sheikh his protector: "since God has called thee into his path, follow it bravely; and, in truth, it is with the horse and the spear that the honour of a lineage is to be maintained." The young men of the Zenate tribe, and several others of the surrounding Bedouins, volunteered to follow the gallant adventurer; he landed on the coast of Spain with a thousand horsemen, and, in a few days, more than twenty times that number had ranged themselves beneath his banners.

"Abd-er-Rahman's reception in Spain," says Dr. Southey,* "resembles in many respects the restoration of our Charles the Second; there was something of a similar hereditary attachment, a similar anarchy preceded, and the necessity of a settled government was acknowledged." Here the parallel fails: Abd-er-Rahman was one of the best sovereigns that ever reigned; under his vigorous administration civil dissensions were quelled, the bands of marauders by which the country was devastated were either exterminated or compelled to adopt peaceful occupations, arsenals were erected in the sea-ports, and fleets fitted out to protect the country by a maritime force. Pelayo's successors in the Asturias, or, as it now began to be called, the king-

* For. Quart. Rev. vol. i. 22.

dom of Leon, made peace with the khaliph of Spain, and agreed to pay him a moderate tribute; tranquillity was established throughout the peninsula, and the attendant blessings of plenty and prosperity were rapidly developed. Abd-er-Rahman's nobles were weary of war; they had grown tired of expeditions amongst rocks and mountains, in which great dangers were incurred, great privations endured, great difficulties encountered, while little was to be gained in reputation, and nothing in plunder. The attempts which they made in the Pyrenees are described to have been obstinate, and confessed to have been unavailing; the Mussulmans wearying themselves, it is said, with following, among rocks and precipices, wild men who were clothed in bear-skins, were armed with pikes and bills, and had nothing but their arms to lose.

The uncivilized Arabs and Moors who first invaded Spain were so little acquainted with architecture, that they regarded the magnificent bridges erected over the Guadiana and the Tagus as the work of jinns and afreets; but, when Abd-er-Rahman found himself in secure enjoyment of that peace which had been always his heart's desire, he began to embellish with splendid and stupendous structures the city of Cordova, which he had chosen for his capital, and which in a short time became the Bagdad of the Western World. It is said that he himself planned the Great Mosque, intending that it should surpass in splendour that which the

Abassides, the enemies of his house, had erected in their new metropolis; that it should equal the mosque of Omar in Jerusalem, and resemble that of Damascus, the scene of his youth, to which his heart and imagination frequently recurred. It was love of home, and the associations of his native land, that led him to introduce the palm-tree into Spain: he addressed a beautiful little poem to the first palm which was planted in the royal gardens at Cordova; it represents him, in the midst of worldly greatness, regretting the scenes of his youth, and even in a literal translation few can read it without being affected by its tenderness.

"Fair palm-tree, thou also art a stranger here! The gentle airs of Algarve court and kiss thee. Thy roots are fixed in a fertile soil; thy head is erected towards Heaven: but thou too wouldst shed tears of bitterness, if, like me, thou couldst look back! But thou feelest not, as I do, the calamities of fortune. I wept under the palms which the Forat* waters, when my unhappy fate and the cruelty of the Abasside compelled me to forsake what I so dearly loved. The trees and the river have forgotten my sorrows; and thou, my beloved country, retainest no remembrance of me! But never shall I cease to lament for thee!"†

Abd-er-Rahman was succeeded by his third son,

* The river Euphrates is called the Forat in all the Semitic languages.

† Mrs. Hemans has an exquisite poem founded on a similar

Hashem, or, according to the Spanish writers, Huem. He inherited his father's love of literature, his talent in composition, his delight in rural enjoyments, his devotion, and his love of justice. He bestowed personal labour every day upon the Great Mosque, which was completed and dedicated during his reign. Little did he anticipate that this monument both of his piety and splendour was destined long to outlast the Moorish empire in Spain as a Christian cathedral. "But perhaps the most imposing ceremonies of Romish worship which

anecdote; we quote the three first stanzas, describing the contrast between the foreign tree and the European foliage:

It waved not through an Eastern sky
Beside a fount of Araby;
It was not fann'd by southern breeze
In some green isle of Indian seas;
Nor did its graceful shadow sleep
O'er stream of Afric lone and deep:

But fair the exiled palm-tree grew
'Midst foliage of no kindred hue;
Through the laburnum's dropping gold
Rose the light shaft of Orient mould;
And Europe's violets, faintly sweet,
Purpled the moss-beds at its feet.

Strange look'd it there!—The willow stream'd
Where silvery waters near it gleam'd;
The lime-bough lured the honey-bee
To murmur by the Desert's tree;
And showers of snowy roses made
A lustre in its fan-like shade.

Records of Woman, &c. 272.

have been performed there since its second consecration, have been less impressive than the effect of the four thousand seven hundred lamps which illuminated it at evening service, when there was no tinsel and frippery and puppetry to debase the structure."* Works of greater utility, though less magnificent in their appearance, engaged the attention of the khaliph: he caused the military roads, originally laid out by the Romans, to be repaired; he opened several new lines of communication between the principal towns of Spain; and he renewed the principal bridges, which had been suffered to fall into decay after the conquest. His revenues were liberally expended in endowing hospitals and schools in connection with the principal mosques. The great school of Cordova might be said to have ranked as a university: thither were attracted the most eminent poets, mathematicians, naturalists, and astrologers from the remotest parts of the East; and, though their speculations were sullied by the follies of alchemy and judicial astrology, the professors of Cordova far surpassed those of Christendom both in the extent and accuracy of their scientific knowledge. The two first Ommiade khaliphs of Cordova set the example of making the care of literature a part of the kingly office; and their successors, profiting by such a noble precedent, raised the arts and sciences into life, after they had been crushed into dust by the Northern

* Southey, F. Q. R. i. 27.

barbarians. "Spain, under the Moors, produced, unquestionably, more royal authors than any other age or nation in the world. The courts of those princes resembled academic meetings, in which the sovereign conversed on a footing of equality with his accomplished associates. The successful orator or poet was rewarded with the ring, or shawl, or pelisse of the khaliph, who placed it on him with his own hands, and treated him with the familiarity of a friend. The politeness of the court was gradually diffused abroad, and the people caught the literary ardour of their rulers with that plastic fidelity which seems in a great degree characteristic of Eastern nations. The Moors were viewed with awe-struck bigotry by their ignorant neighbours, who, by an ill-intended flattery, intelligible at the present day, ascribed to magic their great superiority in the chemical and other arts. So great was the multitude of their authors, and such has been the ingratitude of posterity, that, in all probability, we are, at the present day, less adequately acquainted with Arabian literature from its remains than with the Greek or Roman."*

A curious example of Hashem's literary taste and love of justice combined has been preserved

* F. Q. R. iii. 5.—Hajji Khalfa published a catalogue of more than fifteen thousand Arabian authors whose works were known in the seventeenth century. It is probable, however, that most of these were mere compilers; encyclopædias were an Arabian invention, and the editors did not hesitate to transcribe without scruple, and often without acknowledgment, the labours of their predecessors.

by the historians. His courtiers strenuously urged him to buy a valuable estate, studded with thriving villages, which lay contiguous to his favourite garden, and was both a valuable property in itself and a very desirable addition to the royal demesnes. It need hardly be said, that, when a khaliph determines to become a purchaser of anything, the price is regulated by his discretion; and, if any Naboth should be so rash as to refuse his vineyard to a greedy Ahab, a Jezebel will not be wanting to gratify the royal avarice and vengeance. Hashem was frequently urged by his courtiers to take possession, by fair means or by foul, of this valuable piece of ground; and some writers add, that the owner would not have been disinclined to gratify his sovereign. But Hashem refused to engage in what he probably considered a very questionable transaction, and he answered the solicitations of his courtiers in a copy of verses, which we shall venture to translate, in compliment to the royal muse.* We deem them, indeed, equally creditable to the head and heart of the writer:

"I want not wealth, I want not land;
My boast is of an open hand:
No selfishness shall e'er control
The generous promptings of my soul.
Free were the gifts bestow'd by Heaven,
As freely shall my boons be given.

"I love my garden's sunny flowers,
Its sparkling founts, its shady bowers;

* Marles, Histoire des Maures, i. 150.

"I love the country's bracing air,
Its manly sports, its homely fare:
No villages I wish to gain,
Safe with their owners they remain.

"In hours of peace my bounty flows,
A stream that ebbing never knows;
But, like a deluge o'er the land,
Its ever-spreading floods expand.
In war I grasp the victor steel,
And seas of blood my wrath reveal.

"Philosophy affords delight
To cheer the loneliness of night,
Whilst I survey the moon and stars
Circling the pole on golden cars;
And thus I 'm hail'd a double lord,
Both of the pen and of the sword."

After the death of Hashem the first symptoms of civil dissension among the Moors began to be manifest; and these gradually increased, until insurgent chiefs sought the aid of native Spaniards to crush their rivals, and even entered into alliance with foreign princes. Hashem is said to have read in the stars the future fate of the Ommiades, and, at the same time, discovered from the aspect of the constellations that his own life approached its termination. He appointed his son Al-Hakím his successor in the kingdom, and gave him the same advice which, according to tradition, he had received from his own father. "Since God in his bounty," said the khaliph, "has entrusted thee with kingly power, do thou perform His will; which performance consists in doing right to all men, and

more especially to those who are dependent upon thee, for all are the creatures of God. Punish without remission the officers who oppress thy people with arbitrary exactions. Rule thy troops with gentleness and firmness, when at any time necessity may compel thee to take arms; let them be the defenders, not the destroyers, of the land: be careful, therefore, to make them contented, and disappoint them not in thy promises. Seek always to obtain the good-will of the people; for their good-will is the security of the State, their fear is its danger, their hatred is its certain ruin."

Such advice addressed to Al-Hakím was like the good seed which fell upon a rock, for it found a stony heart. A popular commotion at Toledo, which was principally inhabited by Jews and Christians, afforded the first opportunity for the display of his cruelty. He sent his son thither, with secret orders to the governor to invite the principal citizens to meet the young prince at a banquet, and then slaughter them without mercy. The unsuspecting guests were led as fast as they arrived to the vaults of the palace, where executioners were ready to receive them; their bodies were thrown into one common grave, and in the morning more than a thousand heads were exhibited to the astonished gaze of the people! Soon afterwards the khalipli discovered that a conspiracy had been formed against him in Cordova, where he had provoked general indignation by entrusting the

defence of himself and his household to a standing army of five thousand foreigners, of whom three thousand were Andalusian Christians, and the rest Sclavonians. In the third watch of the night, detachments of these guards surrounded the house of every man who was suspected of having had any share in the plot; and, before the khaliph slept, three hundred heads, warm from the scimitar, were rolled on the carpet of his apartment.

In order to pay these obnoxious guards, the khaliph levied a duty on all provisions coming into the city. Resistance was made to this tax; the collectors were insulted and set at defiance: ten of the ringleaders were arrested in the act of rioting, and were immediately sentenced to be impaled alive in the market-place. A vast crowd assembled to witness this barbarous execution; the soldiers wounded one of the people, who pressed too close upon their ranks: a second and fiercer tumult arose; the mob attacked the detested troops, killed many of them, and pursued the rest to the very gates of the palace. Al-Hakím, on the first intelligence of the tumult, had put on his armour and placed himself at the head of his horse-guards. When the mob approached, the gates of the palace were thrown open; the cavalry dashed at full speed upon the disordered multitude; numbers of the rioters were cut down, or trampled under the feet of the horses. Three hundred were made prisoners, and these miserable wretches were

immediately impaled along the banks of the river. Even this savage butchery, was insufficient to glut the vengeance of the insatiable Al-Hakím; he gave up the southern suburbs of Cordova, where the disturbance originated, to be pillaged during three days by his licentious soldiery, and at the end of that time ordered the entire district to be levelled with the ground, and drove all the remaining inhabitants into exile, giving them their lives only on this condition.

Eight thousand of the families driven from Cordova were received into Fez, then a new city, and had a particular district assigned for their habitation. Another body, said to have been fifteen thousand in number, having landed in Barbary, made their way to Egypt and appeared before Alexandria: being refused admittance, they forced an entrance, made a great slaughter of the inhabitants, and kept possession of the city as masters, till the governor of Egypt made terms with them, and by the payment of a large sum induced them to depart for the purpose of conquering a settlement in some one of the Greek islands. They made choice of Crete, which, being thinly peopled, was easily won; there they established themselves, and with a fleet of twenty vessels infested the other islands and the coasts of the Byzantine empire. Having thus acquired great wealth, many of them began to feel an eager desire to return to their own country; but their leaders, wisely

fearing to put themselves in the power of a frantic tyrant from whom they had once escaped, put an end to the project by burning the ships. The Saracenic empire in Spain had now touched the highest point of all its greatness; and, though it was still dreaded in Western Europe, it was no longer really formidable to Christendom.

We must now go back to the period immediately subsequent to the conquest of Spain, in order to trace the history of the Saracens in France. Early in the year 719, Zama, a distinguished leader of the Arabs, forced the passes of the Pyrenees, and established himself in that part of Languedoc known to the writers of the middle ages as the Gothic Septimania.* Narbonne, the capital of the province, was taken by assault; all the inhabitants were put to the sword, and their place was supplied by a mixed colony of Arabs and Berbers. Encouraged by this success, Zama attempted to pass the Rhone; but the Provençals made so gallant a defence, that he abandoned his design and advanced against Toulouse. Eudes, duke of Aquitaine, threw himself into his capital city with his best troops; all the assaults of the enemy were repulsed, and Zama himself slain. But this disaster did not check the ravages of the Saracens; they stormed Nismes and Carcasone, traversed the greater part of Burgundy as far as Autun, took that city by a sudden assault, pillaged it com-

* Hist. Gen. du Languedoc, viii. 9.

pletely, and returned to Septimania loaded with booty.

Eudes, duke of Aquitaine, had long acted as an independent sovereign; few, indeed, of the Frank nobles paid more than a nominal obedience to the feeble Merovingian kings: but the rising power of Charles Martel was likely to produce a change, and his talents both as a statesman and a general were dreaded by the subordinate nobles. Charles was personally odious to Eudes; and the duke, in order to secure the aid of a powerful ally in case his independence should be menaced, and also to put an end to the ravages perpetrated by the Saracens in his dominion, entered into a treaty with the Mohammedans, and, to cement the alliance, gave his daughter in marriage to their chief, Munuza.*

The alliance which the duke of Aquitaine had contracted with the Saracen chief, far from contributing to his safety, only tended to involve him in the political intrigues which then began to trouble the empire of the khaliphs. Abd-er-Rahman—not, as some have absurdly supposed, the Spanish sovereign of that name; but the representative of the khaliph of Damascus at Cordova, at a time when the conquests of the Mussulmans still formed an undivided empire—discovered, or believed that he had discovered, a plot of Munuza's to form Septimania and Catalonia into

* Isid. Pac. Chron. 18.

an independent kingdom, and to withdraw his allegiance from the Saracenic empire. He immediately collected all the forces at his disposal, marched against Munuza, who was totally unprepared for such promptitude, pursued him into the mountains, offered a reward for his head, which was soon brought to him, and, having made his wife a prisoner, sent the lady to form one of the harem of his master at Damascus. Having a large army at his disposal, Abd-er-Rahman resumed the ancient plans of conquest which the Saracens had begun to abandon; he crossed the Pyrenees, laid waste Gascony, and, having taken the city of Bordeaux by assault, gave it up to be pillaged by his soldiers. The duke of Aquitaine, retiring before this formidable enemy, assembled all the forces he could muster on the banks of the Dordogne. Abd-er-Rahman crossed the river, attacked Eudes on its banks, and made such a fearful slaughter of the men of Aquitaine that there was no possibility of ever organizing again the shattered remnant of the army; and the duke had no other resource but to apply for aid to the Northern Franks, and to their distinguished leader, Charles Martel.

While Southern and Western Gaul were left unprotected, the Saracens ravaged Périgord, Saintonge, and Poitou; they burned the church of St. Hilary in the very suburbs of Poitiers, and laid close siege to Tours, attracted by the fame of

the treasures which mistaken devotion had piled around the shrine of St. Martin, the patron saint of that city. Gaul seemed menaced with the same fate as Spain: there was similar discord among the nobility, similar corruption in the army, and want of public spirit in the people; and there was even a more obstinate determination on the part of the clergy not to contribute one fraction towards the expenses of a war which actually threatened greater peril to them than to any other party in the state.* The Merovingian kings had also fallen into a state of more helpless degradation than the Spanish Visigoths at any period of their history; and, had not a hero been found able to contend against this concurrence of adverse circumstances, the Saracens must have carried their victorious banners from the Rhone to the Rhine, and thence in all probability to the Thracian Bosphorus.

Charles received the duke of Aquitaine with all possible demonstrations of friendship; he frankly proposed an oblivion of all past disputes, and evinced his own sincerity by the diligent exertions which he made to assist his ancient rival with all the forces of the monarchy. As the clergy obstinately refused to make the slightest contribution to the defence of their country and religion, Charles, without any hesitation, seized on all available ecclesiastical property; but he met

* Sismondi, Hist. des Francs, iii. 119.

with so much resistance, that the Saracens had leisure to devastate the fairest provinces of France before an army could be embodied sufficient to justify the hero in venturing the hazard of a battle. The Christians and Saracens met in the vicinity of Poitiers; seven days were spent in skirmishes between the light troops on both sides, and in various movements to secure the advantage of ground in the coming engagement. At length, on the morning of a Saturday in the month of October, 732, the decisive battle commenced, and it was not terminated until the sun had sunk below the horizon. The Arabs appear to have depended chiefly on their cavalry and light troops;* but their repeated charges made little impression on the iron men of the North, whose unbroken lines drove them back like waves ebbing from a rock. Abd-er-Rahman's men were wearied out by their fruitless efforts to break the battalions, when Charles gave the signal for his men to advance, in their turn, with their heavy pikes and weighty swords. The scimitars and javelins of the Arabs could not cope with the heavier weapons of their adversaries; they were overborne by the physical superiority of the Franks, and their lines were broken through, trodden down, and

* Isidore, in his brief chronicle, has left us the best description of this battle; but, though contemporary with the event, it is evident, on the slightest inspection, that his account was chiefly derived from ballads and popular songs.

filled with confusion. Abd-er-Rahman fell while vainly endeavouring to rally his squadrons; the Arabs were completely daunted by the ghastly wounds which they saw the heavy hands of the Germans inflict; Charles himself gained the name of "Martel," or "The Hammerer," from the fearful use he made of his mace on that eventful day; and the superiority of the German infantry over the Saracenic cavalry was decisively established.

The Saracens fled to their camp; the Christians did not pursue them, for many of their bravest had fallen, and those who survived were completely exhausted. As was their custom, the Franks raised their weapons above their heads as a signal to their chief that they could not wield them any longer; and Charles consented that they should bivouac on the field which their valour had won, and be ready to renew the engagement on the following morning. Sunday dawned, the Christians drew out in battle-array, and for several hours waited for the renewal of the attack; but the Saracens, having discovered the extent of their losses, abandoned their tents in the middle of the night, and were beyond the reach of pursuit before Charles discovered their evasion. An immense booty was found in the Saracenic camp, which was fairly distributed among the victorious soldiers, to whom the general freely abandoned his own share of the spoil. In their retreat, the Mussulmans massacred every Christian they met;

set fire to churches, monasteries, and convents; pillaged the shrines of saints, and threw the relics to the winds; and carried their ravages to such an extent, that a subsequent generation was taught to believe that every little place which accidentally escaped owed its preservation to a special miracle.

The victory of Poitiers was not in itself so great a triumph as it has been usually represented, but its consequences have not been exaggerated: the tide of Saracenic invasion was driven back from Western Europe; courage was restored to the Franks and Gauls; the Moors, when they ventured to renew their invasions, encountered everywhere the most determined resistance; and, in fact, Christendom was saved.

It was not until the year 739, that Charles Martel found leisure to renew his expeditions against the Saracens, and their allies, in the south of France. For this purpose he entered into an alliance with Luitprand, who at this period reigned gloriously in Lombardy, and who had reason to fear that the Spanish Moors, already powerful by sea, might make their appearance in Italy. His alarm was not without foundation; several of the discontented and turbulent nobles of Provence had entered into alliance with the Saracens, and offered not only to grant a free passage through their dominions, but to join the invaders with all

their forces.* Whilst Luitprand secured the passes of the Alps, Charles entered Provence at the head of a powerful army, captured Avignon, and, advancing along the sea-coast to Marseilles, destroyed the fortresses and castles which piratical adventurers from Spain and Africa had been permitted to erect. Maurontes, duke of Provence, the chief ally of the Saracens, was forced to seek refuge in the mountains; and the other great lords, who had entered into a league with the enemies of their country and their religion, were either deprived of their estates, or compelled to give hostages for their good behaviour. By these vigorous measures the dangers which menaced Italy were averted; and the civil wars, which soon after arose in the khaliphate between the Ommiades and the Abassides, prevented the Mussulmans from pursuing their career of conquest.†

It might have been reasonably supposed, that the French clergy would have canonized a hero who had saved their churches from being turned into mosques, and themselves from destruction; but the clerical body in that age was more remarkable for the durability of its resentments than

* Sismondi, Hist. des Francs, iii. 141.

† The plan for marching a Saracenic army from Spain across Europe, to co-operate with the forces of the Eastern khaliphs in besieging Constantinople, was often revived in the eighth century, if we are to credit the Arabian historians.—Al Makin, Epit.

the strength of its gratitude.* In order to defray the expenses of the troops which he had levied for the defence of the realm, Charles had been obliged to sequestrate some portion of the vast property possessed by the church, and frequently to assign the revenues of vacant benefices to pay his principal officers; had he not done so, the Saxons on one side of France, and the Saracens on the other, would have left the church and clergy no property to protect. His interference with ecclesiastical property was never forgiven by the men who were indebted to him for their very existence; one hundred and twenty years after his death, the French clergy, assembled in national council at Kiersi,† addressed a solemn letter to Louis the Germanic, pronouncing a solemn condemnation on the memory of his illustrious ancestor. This singular document is too illustrative of the age to be omitted.

"We declare that prince Charles, the father of king Pepin, having been the first of the kings and princes of the Franks who plundered and divided the property of the church, is for this cause damned to all eternity. In fact, we know that St. Eucherius, bishop of Orleans, whose body reposes in the convent of St. Trudon, whilst at his prayers, was suddenly carried away to the world of spirits, and amongst the things which he saw, and which our Blessed Lord showed him, he recognized Charles Martel suffering the most fearful

* Sismondi, ubi suprà. † A. D. 858.

torments in the lowest depths of hell. The angel who conducted him, being questioned by Eucherius on this subject, replied, that the body and soul of every one who plundered the property of the church would be doomed to eternal torments, even before the end of the world and the day of final retribution, by the just sentence of the saints, associated as judges with Our Lord. Each of these sacrilegious persons will have to suffer, not only for his own sins, but also for the sins of those who believed that they had expiated their offences by endowing holy places, making provision for the celebration of public worship, and bestowing alms on the servants of Christ for the redemption of their souls. When St. Eucherius recovered from his trance, he summoned St. Boniface, and abbot Fulrad, of the convent of St. Denis, king Pepin's first chaplain, to whom he related all these matters; he advised them to go immediately to the tomb in which Charles had been interred, in order that the truth of the vision should be proved if the body were not found. Boniface and Fulrad immediately proceeded to the convent in which Charles had been buried; and, having opened the tomb, a monstrous dragon rushed out of it, and the inside of the tomb was found completely blackened, as if it had been burned. We ourselves have seen persons, who survived to our own days, and who were present at the occurrences we have mentioned, and who have borne undeniable testi-

mony to what they have seen and heard. The matter was brought under the cognizance of king Pepin; he assembled a synod at Leptines, over which St. Boniface presided, in conjunction with a legate of the apostolic see, named George. We have before us the acts of that synod, which enjoined that all ecclesiastical property should be restored to the church and clergy; and as Pepin could not immediately make this restitution, on account of the war in which he was involved with Waifer, prince of Aquitaine, he gave a lien on them to the bishops, commanding that the various descriptions of property should pay the legal dues and tithes, and that every dwelling-house should be subject to an annual rate, until these estates were restored to the church." *

It deserves to be remarked, that this solemn declaration of the church of France is full of the most audacious falsifications of notorious facts, with which most of the prelates present must have been well acquainted. They may have had sufficient credulity and love of the marvellous to believe in the vision, and its confirmation by the prodigy discovered at the tomb; for many similar stories, and some still more absurd, are gravely recorded by the ecclesiastical writers of that age: but writing, as they themselves state, with the acts of the synod

* Epistola patrum synodi Carisiacensis, anno 858, ad Ludov. German. reg.; inter capitular. Car. Cal. tit. xxvii.: apud Chesnium, i. 792.

before them, it is astonishing how they could have ventured to write so many gross and wilful falsehoods. The legate George did not preside at the council of Leptines: that council was not convoked by Pepin, but by Carloman; and in none of its acts is there any mention whatever of the condemnation of Charles Martel, or the restoration of ecclesiastical property. To crown the whole, St. Eucherius, on whose testimony the venerable prelates rest their case, died three years before Charles Martel.*

The establishment of the kingdom of Leon, which we have already described, stimulated the hopes and the courage of the Goths of Septimania, who had for more than thirty years groaned under the Saracenic yoke. Septimania, a name which included the greater part of Languedoc, had not previously been united to the French monarchy. During the whole period of the Merovingian dynasty, it had formed part of the dominions of the Visigoths, and was usually designated as a portion of Spain. The Saracens regarded it as a province of the peninsula, and it is generally included as such in the territory of Andalúz by the Arabian writers.† Pepin, the son of Charles Martel, having dethroned the last of the Merovingian kings, and obtained the papal sanction for his usurpation, resolved to complete the

* Sismondi, Hist. des Francs, iii. 146. See also the Notes of the honest Benedictine editors on this synodical letter; Script. Franc. iii. 659.

† El Marudi's Golden Meadows, i. 14.

subjugation of Languedoc and Aquitaine, which had been left incomplete by Clovis and his successors: he opened communications with the Gothic lords of Septimania, who had taken up arms against the Saracens, disciplined their peasants as soldiers, and turned their castles into fortresses. Civil dissensions prevented the khaliphs of Cordova from sending assistance to their subjects east of the Pyrenees; the Mussulmans were compelled to abandon the open country, but they shut themselves up in Narbonne, trusting that the possession of the capital would enable them to maintain their hold of the province.* Pepin offered his assistance to the insurgent Visigoths, which they gladly accepted, for they believed that nothing but the protection of the king of the Franks could save them from the menaced vengeance of the khaliphs of Cordova. Ansemond, a Visigoth claiming descent from the ancient line of kings, and who had been recognized as their liege lord by the important towns of Nismes, Maguelonne, and Beziers, voluntarily declared himself the subject of king Pepin, and his example had a decisive effect on his countrymen. Pepin, in return, immediately led an army into Septimania and laid siege to Narbonne;† but the wars in which he was involved with the Lombards and Saxons prevented him from bestowing his undivided attention on the affairs of Septimania. The Franks, besides,

* Hist. Gen. du Languedoc, viii. 46—48. † A. D. 752.

had very little skill in the attack or defence of fortified places; while the Saracens, who had acquired considerable eminence in engineering and mechanics, had employed every means which the state of these sciences admitted to render the city impregnable. From the united effect of these and other causes, the defence of Narbonne was protracted for more than seven years. At length the Christians within the walls, who were still more numerous than the Mussulmans, fatigued by a toilsome and ruinous war, secretly offered to yield the city to Pepin, if he would guarantee them their ancient rights, laws, and jurisdiction. These terms were accepted: a sudden and unexpected attack was made upon the Saracens as they guarded the ramparts; before they could recover from their surprise, the gates of the city were thrown open, the Franks and Goths immediately entered, and Narbonne once more became a Christian city, just forty years after its first occupation by the Mussulmans. All the Gothic or Roman lords throughout the province, including those who had escaped from the incursions of the Saracens, tendered their allegiance to Pepin on the same terms which had been accorded to Narbonne. The counts of the different towns and districts were confirmed in their privileges and jurisdictions; vacancies were supplied by the nomination of those who had distinguished themselves in the war; considerable privileges were granted to the churches, which

had been reduced to ruin under the Saracenic domination; and Languedoc was united to France by more honourable means, and on more equitable terms, than any other province which was ever annexed to that monarchy.

The monkish historians bestow great praise on king Pepin, who was a generous benefactor to the church, and made more than an ample compensation for the ecclesiastical treasures which his father had confiscated. But it is a curious characteristic of the age, that even Pepin is described as suffering supernatural chastisement for attempting to seize church property, even after he had obtained the pope's sanction to the appropriation. Having previously obtained permission from Rome, he wished to take possession of Anisiac, in the diocese of Loudun, which St. Remi had bestowed upon the church of the blessed Virgin. For this purpose he took up his abode in the castle of Anisiac; but in the night St. Remi stood beside his couch, armed with a heavy scourge or horsewhip, and thus unceremoniously addressed the king: "What brings you here? Why have you entered this castle, which a man more devout than you bestowed upon me, and which I in my turn have given to the church of the Mother of God!" At the same time the saint laid on the king with such right goodwill, that the marks of the blows did not disappear for several months; and the pain brought on a

violent fever, which was not cured until long after Anisiac had been abandoned.*

The Ommiade dynasty founded by Abd-er-Rahman in Spain was odious to many of the Mussulmans; they regarded it as the cause of schism in the khaliphate, they regretted the interruption of intercourse with their brethren in the East, and they regarded the Abassides with a sort of religious affection on account of their connection with the family of the prophet. Suleiman, the governor of Barcelona, had actually placed himself under the protection of Pepin, rather than acknowledge a rival of the Abassides; but it was not until after the accession of Charlemagne that the discontented Mussulmans of Spain formed any regular alliance with the Franks. Ebn-al-Arabí, the governor of Saragossa, visited Charlemagne at Paderborn, and made such a representation of the condition of Spain, that the Frank monarch prepared two large armies:† one of which crossed the northern Pyrenees, and captured Pampeluna; the second forced an entrance through Rossillon, and effected a junction with the former under the walls of Saragossa. The inhabitants of this city refused to follow the example of their governor: they closed their gates,

* Baronii Annales, A. D. 760.—The worthy historian adds, that this discipline was a mark of divine favour which would not have been accorded to a wicked king, quoting the sacred text, "Whom the Lord loveth, He also chasteneth."

† A. D. 778.

and made a vigorous defence; but the khaliph not coming to their relief, as they had been led to expect, they were forced to capitulate, and pay an immense ransom to save their city from being pillaged. Barcelona renewed the engagements which it had formed with his father, and several other towns in Catalonia professed a readiness to adopt the same course. But Charlemagne had unwisely provoked the jealousy of those on whom he probably reckoned as his natural allies. In his progress through Western France, he had deposed several of the native counts of Aquitaine, and supplied their place with Franks; and he had shown a similar distrust of his partisans, both Saracen and Christian, in the Spanish marches. The monarchs of the petty Christian kingdoms of Navarre and the Asturias became alarmed: they feared that Charlemagne, if successful, would send Frank garrisons to occupy their cities and castles, as he had done in Aquitaine and Septimania; and they preferred the light vassalage in which they were held by the khaliphs, to the iron yoke likely to be imposed upon them by the Franks.

The insurrection of the Saxons under Wittikind compelled Charlemagne to return home for the defence of his German provinces; he destroyed the fortifications of Pampeluna, and, forming his army into two divisions, commenced his retreat through the celebrated defile of Roncesvalles. History has noticed very slightly the calamity of this

retreat, which countless poets and romancers have rendered immortal. It appears that the partisans of the deposed duke of Aquitaine in Gascony had united with the forces of the king of Navarre, the Saracens, and the barbarous mountaineers, to plunder the rich booty with which the French returned laden. The last division of the Franks, entrusted with the care of the baggage, was commanded by Roland, the most illustrious of the heroes of song and romance,* but of whom little

* The circumstance that "the song of Roland" was sung by the Normans as they marched to the decisive battle of Hastings, renders it highly interesting to all students of English history. The original has long since disappeared, but we subjoin (ut quiddam notum propriumque) a translation of the most popular of the modern French versions of the song, which was published some months ago in Bentley's Miscellany:

Say, whither are bound these illustrious knights,
The pride and the glory of France?
In defence of his country, its laws, and its rights,
Each paladin takes up his lance;
And foremost is Roland, whose scimitar keen
The harvest of war prostrate leaves,
While, led to the slain by its glittering sheen,
Death gathers them up in his sheaves.
Shout! comrades, shout!
Roland famous in story;
And your war-cry give out,
"For our country and glory!"

On our frontier the Saracen armies extend
Their legions in splendid array;
The unnumbered bands from the hills that descend
Their menacing banners display.

'Tis

more is certainly known than that he had been previously entrusted with the government of the marches of Brittany. "The Gascons and their allies," says Eginhard, "formed ambuscades on the summits of the mountains; the thickness of the forests, which are there in great abundance, rendering the place most favourable for a sudden surprise. Rushing

'Tis the foe! 'tis the foe! Sons of France, spring to arms!
And drive back the barbarous horde:
To them, not to us, will the fight bring alarms:
Brave Roland has ask'd for his sword.
Shout! comrades, shout! &c.

On—onward with Roland to honour and fame!
Glory 's waving her flag by his side;
And those who would gain an illustrious name
Must follow his plume as their guide!
On—onward, to share in his glorious career.
He stops not to number the foe,
Till, cleft by his sabre or pierced by his spear,
Their bravest and best are laid low.
Shout! comrades, shout! &c.

"How many? how many?" the coward may ask,
As he lurks in his covert secure;
But perilous odds urge the brave to their task,
And danger itself is a lure.
To Roland the number of foes is unknown;
To count them he never is found,
Until at the close, by his might overthrown,
They be stark and stiff on the ground.
Shout! comrades, shout! &c.

Once more rings the blast of the paladin's horn
As he rallies our wavering bands;
But, pierced by a shaft, to the earth he is borne,
His life-blood is clotting the sands.

Still

down from their heights, they attacked the baggage in the rear, and the battalion by which it was escorted. These warriors made a gallant defence, and were cut off to a man. The Gascons then, having pillaged the baggage, took advantage of the night to disperse in every direction with the utmost celerity. The lightness of their arms, and the nature of the place in which the battle was fought, gave them every advantage; whilst the Franks were encumbered by their heavy armour, and were besides posted in a most unfavourable position. In this combat, Eygirhard the grand chamberlain, Anselm count of the palace, and Roland warden of the marches of Brittany, were slain, with several others. It was not possible for Charlemagne to take immediate vengeance for this offence; the enemies had dispersed, and fled so rapidly, that they were safe in their fastnesses before the king heard of the calamity."*

The legendary account of Roncesvalles and its fatal fight is a mixture of tradition and invention with the slightest possible quantity of historical

Still faithful to honour, he heeds not the pain,
But smiles with a welcome to Death;
While high o'er the tumult is heard the proud strain
Which he shouts with unfaltering breath,
"Swell, comrades, swell
The loud chaunt of my story;
Sing how nobly I fell
For my country and glory!"

* Eginhardi Vita Car. Mag. ix. 92.

fact; it is, however, so interesting in itself, and it has exercised so great and enduring an influence over the literature of Southern Europe, that we cannot pass it over without notice. According to the legend, Charlemagne, in a war which lasted more than seven years,* had nearly completed the conquest of Spain. The Moorish monarch, whom the romancers are pleased to designate Marsiles, in dread of total ruin, held a council of his principal emírs and nobles, who unanimously recommended him to conciliate Charles by immediate submission. A Saracen ambassador, with the usual inconsistency of romance, is said to have been pitched close to the Spanish marches, and he addressed the monarch in the following words: "God protect you! Behold, here are presents which my master sends; and he engages, if you withdraw from Spain, to come and do you homage at Aix-la-Chapelle."

Charlemagne summoned his twelve paladins to council to deliberate on this offer. Roland strenuously opposed entering into any terms with an infidel, and declared that it was their duty to rescue Spain from the dominion of the crescent, and place it under the banner of the cross.† Two

* The war lasted only six years, according to the metrical version of the legend:

Charles li rois a la barbe grifaigne
Six ans toz plenz a este en Espagne.

† The legend is here guilty of a gross anachronism, for the religious or crusading spirit did not influence the Christians in

of the paladins, however, Ganelon and the duke Naimes, maintained that it was contrary to the rules of chivalry to refuse grace to a conquered enemy.* Charlemagne, who in the romances is represented as a perfect model of knightly courtesy, yielded to the arguments of the friends of peace, and inquired which of his peers would undertake to return with the ambassador, and bear back a suitable reply to king Marsiles. Ganelon proffered his services; but Roland contemptuously declared him unfit for such a duty, and offered himself in his stead.

A warm debate arose in the council. Ganelon, irritated by the scorn with which Roland treated his pretensions, and indignant at some imputations on his fidelity and courage, said angrily to his rival, "Take care that some mischief does not overtake you." Roland, among whose virtuous qualities moderation cannot be enumerated, replied,

their wars against the Mussulmans before the eleventh century. "The Crusade," says Southey, "is but a Christian name for an invention borrowed from the Mohammedans, when the condition of Europe and of Christendom required that their own devices should be turned against them, and that one principle of warlike fanaticism should be brought into action against another." The leaders of the Afghans, in their late insurrection against the English, took the title of Ghazís, which is similar in its meaning and purport to Crusaders.

* The times of chivalry, says Sismondi, never existed, except in romances. We may add, that the romances which developed the theory of chivalry began to be written about two centuries after the death of Charlemagne.

"Go to, you speak like a fool! We want men of sense to carry our messages; if the emperor pleases, I will go in your place." In great irritation Ganelon replied, "Charles is commander here, I submit myself to his will." At these words Roland burst into an immoderate fit of laughter; but this act of discourtesy so offended the rest of the council, that the paladins with one voice recommended Ganelon as the most suitable ambassador to be sent to Marsiles.*

The Saracenic ambassador had received private information of the angry discussion which had taken place in the imperial council. As he returned to his court, he took every opportunity of reminding Ganelon of the insult he had received; and, though he did not immediately succeed, he certainly weakened the paladin's loyalty, and led him secretly to deliberate on the possibility of obtaining revenge by means of treason. At his first interview with Marsiles, he maintained the pride and dignity of a French chevalier. "Charles is old now," said the Moorish monarch; "he must be close upon a hundred years of age.

* According to the old metrical version, many ambassadors had been sent to the Moor, all of whom had been slain on the road. Roland then proposed that the mission should be entrusted to Ganelon of Mayence, who was his step-father; and all the Franks applauded his choice. Ganelon, believing that Roland had made this proposition in order to get rid of him, vowed revenge; and, on his road to Saragossa, intimated to the Saracen ambassador, Blankardin, that he was disposed to betray the Christians, if a sufficient bribe should be offered.

Does he not think of taking some repose?" Ganelon firmly replied, "No! no! Charles is ever powerful; so long as he has round him the twelve peers of France, but particularly Oliver and Roland, Charles need not fear a living man." Subsequent conversations, however, enabled the Moorish monarch to work upon Ganelon's cupidity and his jealousy of Roland so effectually, that he agreed to supply them with such information as would enable him to cut off the rear of the Christian army, when it returned to Roncesvalles, according to the terms of the treaty.

Ganelon returned to the Christian camp, and informed the emperor that Marsiles had consented to become his vassal and pay tribute. Charles immediately gave orders that the army should return to France: he took the command of the van in person; the rear-guard, entrusted with the care of the baggage and plunder, followed at a little distance through the passes of Roncesvalles.

In the mean time Marsiles had collected an immense army, consisting, not merely of his own subjects, but of numerous auxiliaries from Barbary, Morocco, and the wild tribes in the interior of Africa.* According to the instructions of Ganelon,

* There were men from the wilds where the death-wind sweeps,
There were spears from the hills where the lion sleeps,
There were bows from the sands where the ostrich runs,
For the wild horn of Afric had called her sons
To the battles of the West.

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he sent large detachments of his men to occupy the woods and mountains which overhung "the gloomy Roncesvalles' strait."* When the Christians were involved in the pass, they were suddenly attacked at the same moment in front, flank, and rear. Oliver clambered up a tree in order to discover the number of the enemy. Perceiving that their hosts were vastly superior to the French, he called out to Roland, "Brother in arms! the pagans are very numerous, and we Christians are few: if you sounded your horn, the emperor Charles would bring us succour." Roland replied, "God forbid that my lineage should be dishonoured by such a deed! I will strike with my good sword, Durandal; and the pagans, falling beneath my blows, will discover that they have been led hither by their evil fate."—"Sound your horn, companion in arms!" reiterated Oliver; "the enemies hem us in on every side."—"No," repeated Roland: "our Franks are gallant warriors; they will strike heavy blows, and cut through the hosts of the foul paynim." He then prepared his troops for action. Archbishop Turpin, perceiving that the fight would be despe-

* In the gloomy Roncesvalles' strait
There are helms and lances cleft;
And they that moved at morn elate
On a bed of heath are left!
There 's many a fair young face
Which the war-steed hath gone o'er;
At many a board there is kept a place
For those that come no more.

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rate and bloody, commanded all the soldiers to kneel, and join in a general confession of faith; after which he bestowed upon them absolution and his episcopal benediction.*

The Christians made a gallant defence, but numbers finally triumphed over valour; "down went many a noble crest, cloven was many a plumed helmet, the lances were shivered in the grasp of Christendom's knights, and the swords dropped from their wearied arms." Turpin, Oliver, and Roland still survived, and faintly maintained the fight. At length Roland, turning to Oliver, exclaimed, "I will sound my horn; Charles will hear us, and we may yet hope again to see our beloved France."— "Oh! shame and disgrace!" answered Oliver;

* A similar circumstance is recorded of the Scottish army at the commencement of the battle of Bannockburn, which Sir Walter Scott has turned to good account in the "Lord of the Isles," noticing particularly the mistake into which it led the English king Edward:

"Upon the Scottish foe he gazed,—
At once before his sight amazed
Sunk banner, spear, and shield;
Each weapon point is downward sent,
Each warrior to the ground is bent.
'The rebels, Argentine, repent,—
For pardon they have kneel'd.'—
'Ay,—but they bend to higher powers,
And other pardon seek than ours.
See where yon barefoot abbot stands,
And blesses them with lifted hands!
Upon the spot where they have kneel'd
These men will die, or win the field.'"

"why did you not sound when first I asked you? The best warriors of France have been sacrificed to your temerity: we must die with them!" Turpin, however, insisted that the horn should be blown as a signal to the emperor; and Roland blew such a blast that the blood spurted from his mouth, and his wounds, opened afresh, poured forth torrents. Charles, though thirty leagues distant, heard the sound, and said, "Our men are engaged at disadvantage; we must haste to their assistance." —"I do not believe it," replied the traitor Ganelon, and dissuaded the emperor. Roland once more with his dying breath rung a wailing* blast from the horn; Charles knew the character of the sound:

* This is the celebrated warning note to which Sir Walter Scott alludes in his account of the battle of Flodden:

Oh! for a blast of that same horn
On Fontarabian echoes borne,
That to king Charles did come,
When Roland brave, and Olivier,
And every paladin and peer,
On Roncesvalles died.—*Marmion.*

We may be permitted incidentally to remark that Sir Walter Scott has reproduced those lines in Rob Roy, with such little variation as to make us suspect him of designing the passage to be a clue to the discovery of the authorship of the Waverley novels:

"Oh! for the voice of that wild horn
On Fontarabian echoes borne,
The dying hero's call;
That told imperial Charlemagne
How Paynim sons of swarthy Spain
Had wrought his champion's fall."

"Evil has come upon us!" he exclaimed; "those are the dying notes of my nephew Roland!" He hastily returned to Roncesvalles; but Roland and all his companions lay dead upon the plain, and the emperor could only honour their corpses with Christian burial.*

Such are the salient points in the old romance on which the song of Roland is founded. So late as the close of the fifteenth century, the narrative was received as a historical fact; and when John, king of France, a little before the fatal battle of Poitiers, reproached his nobles that there were no Rolands to be found in his army, an aged knight replied, "Sire, Rolands would not be wanting if we could find a Charlemagne."

It would lead us too far into legendary lore were we to examine the accounts which the Spanish romances give of this celebrated battle, and the history of their imaginary hero, Bernard de Carpio, who is said to have stifled Roland in his arms. The legends both of France and Spain have greatly exaggerated the importance of the battle of Roncesvalles; it was merely an attack of savage mountaineers on a weak escort left to guard the baggage; neither Saracens nor Spaniards could claim the merit of the victory, such as it was: the conquerors of the French were the Gascons and Navarrese, amongst whom the traditions of the vast plunder

* According to the metrical romance, Charles ordered that the traitor Ganelon should be torn in sunder by wild horses.

obtained on this occasion were naturally preserved, as such an event was rare in their history; and these traditions, exaggerated by time, were the probable source of the popular ballads on this subject which are still current south of the Pyrenees.

In fact, so little was the power of the Franks weakened by the disaster at Roncesvalles, that the parts of Spain conquered by Charlemagne continued nominally subject to his sway, and were divided into two marches: these were named the Marches of Gothia, which included the greater part of Catalonia; and the Marches of Gascony, which extended beyond the Pyrenees, over Aragon and Navarre, as far as the Ebro. The lords of the latter province were, for the most part, Saracens; and they rendered an uncertain homage, sometimes to the emperor, and sometimes to the khaliph of Cordova, as best suited their interests: not a few of them transferred their homage from one to the other without any ostensible pretext but sheer caprice. In the year 781 Charles conferred the kingdom of Aquitaine, which included the south and west of France, and the provinces wrested from the Saracens beyond the Pyrenees, on his son Louis, then an infant only three years old. As the prince grew older, he was placed under the guardianship of William count of Toulouse, who was generally known by the nickname of "Snub-nose." Romances have made a knight-errant, and monks a saint, of this hero, whose name is scarcely men-

tioned in authentic history. During his administration,* Abd-al-Melek, a favourite general of the khaliph of Cordova, crossed the Ebro, ravaged the marches of Gascony, forced the passage of the Pyrenees, advanced to the walls of Narbonne, burned the suburbs, and obtained a vast amount of booty. The duke of Toulouse attacked the Saracens with the army of Aquitaine, but was defeated with immense loss; Abd-al-Melek then retired slowly within his own frontiers, leading in his train an immense multitude of captives, whom the khaliph employed as slaves in completing the Great Mosque of Cordova. This incursion was not avenged until after the death of the khaliph Hashem;† the civil wars produced by the cruelty of his son and successor enabled the Christians both of France and Spain to extend their dominions at the expense of the Saracens. Alphonso II., king of the Asturias, sent an account of his successes to Charlemagne, thus recognizing the emperor as his liege lord; and the Asturians brought with them to Aix-la-Chapelle a tent of exquisite workmanship which had been taken from the Moors. They met in the imperial court the deputies of the Huns, who had come to offer their submission, and an embassy from the Byzantine emperor, escorted by the Greek governor of Sicily. Soon afterwards,‡ ambassadors came to Charlemagne from the renowned Haroun-er-Rashíd, kha-

* A. D. 793. † He died April 27th, 796. ‡ A. D. 801.

liph of Bagdad, and from Ibrahím, the Edrissite sultan of Fez. They brought with them an elephant, the first that had been seen in Western Europe since the fall of the Roman empire; and a clock with automatic figures, which struck the hours, and exhibited several curious mechanical contrivances. But what excited far more admiration than the obedience of the elephant and the movements of the puppets was, that the Commander of the Faithful sent the sacred standard of Jerusalem, together with the keys of the Holy Sepulchre, to the Christian emperor. Haroun-er-Rashíd was not influenced entirely by motives of mere courtesy; he regarded Charles as the enemy of his great rival, the khaliph of Cordova; for the Mussulmans, like the Christians of the same age, hated heretics and schismatics far more intensely than the open revilers of their religion.

The alliance between Charles and the Abasside khaliph afforded a pretext to the discontented in Spain for withdrawing their allegiance from the heretical khaliph of Cordova. Political and religious dissensions so weakened the Saracens that they were unable to retain their conquests, but were gradually reduced by the growing power of the Spanish Christian monarchs within narrower and narrower limits, until at length they only retained the single province of Granada. The Jews, who had originally invited the Saracens into Spain, always remained faithful to their cause; and

hence arose the intensity of hatred evinced to that unhappy people in the peninsula. Some authors assert that it was the Jews who invited the Saracens to cross the Pyrenees, and that Charlemagne was so convinced of their treachery that he resolved to exterminate all of that race in Languedoc. * Moved, however, by the tears and prayers of such a multitude, he only executed the ringleaders; and condemned the rest to receive a box on the ear, three times a-year, at the gates of such churches as should be named by the bishop, and to contribute annually fourteen pounds of the finest wax to illuminate the cathedrals. It is certain that the Jews were greatly favoured by the enlightened khaliphs of Cordova; under their patronage Jewish schools were founded, the Talmud was translated into Arabic, and several rabbis appointed to superintend the academies of science established in the principal Moorish cities. Dissensions, however, arose among the Jews as well as the Saracens; and many of them acted as spies for the Christian princes, in order to be revenged for the support which the Saracenic chiefs gave to their brethren of different opinions. From the age of Charlemagne the Saracens ceased to be the object of dread in Western Europe; and so little were they regarded, that no project was formed for their expulsion even during the fanaticism of the crusades.

* Marca, Hist. de Bearn. ii. 2.

CHAPTER VI.

The Norman invasions of France, England, and Ireland.—First appearance of the Danish and Norman pirates. — Character and exploits of the Sea-kings. — Specimens of the Sagas.

THE restoration of the empire of the West under Charlemagne may justly be regarded as the starting-point of the modern history of most of the countries in Europe. Christianity was established completely, paganism was extirpated, the dangers with which the Saracens menaced Christendom were averted; an empire was established extending from the Elbe to the Ebro, and having equally the command of the Northern seas and the Mediterranean. Ere, however, he departed from life, he saw the first approaches of the new barbarian hordes which menaced civilization and Christianity for the last time with destruction. "Charles," says the monk of St. Gall, "who was always actively employed, arrived by chance and unexpectedly at a certain seaport in Gallia Narbonensis: whilst he was at his dinner, and as yet unrecognized by any person, some Norman pirates entered the harbour and cast anchor. When they were disco-

vered, a sharp discussion arose amongst the civic authorities respecting the country to which these strange vessels belonged: some believed that they had been fitted out by the Jews; others, that they had come from Africa, or the Saracenic ports of Spain; and others, that they belonged to Brittany. The emperor presented himself in the midst of the dispute; he recognized, by their length of beam, their raking masts, and their sails formed like the wings of birds of prey, that they were not traders, but corsairs. He turned to those around, and said, 'The ships which you see anchored below in the bay are not laden with merchandize, but filled with enemies.' At these words the Franks emulously rushed to their ships: but this demonstration of valour was made in vain; the Normans, learning that the great emperor, whom they had been accustomed to call 'Charles the Hammerer,'* was present in the town, dreaded lest their fleet might be taken or burned in the harbour, and immediately weighed anchor. They fled with such incredible rapidity, that they soon escaped, not only the swords, but the sight of their pursuers."

"The religious emperor could not disguise the alarm which the appearance of these daring pirates occasioned; he quitted the company, and, going to

* They gave him this name, which properly belonged to his grandfather, in consequence of his victories over the Saxons. The intelligence of these victories was, of course, obtained from the Saxon leader Witikind, who had long been an exile in Scandinavia.

a window which looked towards the east, remained there a long time with his arms crossed, weeping plentifully, and never wiping away his tears. At length some of his attendants ventured to ask him what was the cause of such profound grief. 'My faithful friends,' said he, 'do you wish to know why I am so deeply afflicted by the appearance of those strangers? It is not that I fear that they will do me any injury by their miserable piracies, but I am deeply afflicted that even in my life-time these barbarians should have ventured to approach this coast; and I feel my whole soul overcast with gloomy terrors, anticipating the future calamities which these pirates will inflict upon my children and my subjects.'" *

Probably about the same time that Charles was excited by the appearance of those pirates, whose ferocity and courage he had learned to dread during his expeditions into the north of Germany, three ships, of a similar character to those described in the preceding extract, entered one of the harbours on the south-eastern coast of Britain, about a century and a half after the Anglo-Saxons had established their dominion over the southern part of the island, and given it the name of Angle-land, or England. Here the sight of the strange ships produced the same doubts as in France; the Saxon graf, or magistrate of the district, proceeded to the shore to inquire who these

* Gaule et France, p. 89.

strangers were, or what they wanted. The foreigners, who had just disembarked, attacked him and his escort without provocation, slew them on the spot, pillaged the neighbouring houses, and then returned to their vessels. Some time elapsed before it was discovered that these pirates were the Danes, or Normans; names with which the ears of Anglo-Saxons were destined soon to form a terrible familiarity.

The Normans, like the Saxons and Franks, were a branch of the great Teutonic race; but the conversion of the latter to Christianity was viewed by their brethren of the North as an act of treason against the national religion of Germany, and their indignation was still further exasperated by the tales of wrong and suffering related by the crowds of idolatrous Saxons who fled to the isles of the Baltic from the merciless persecution of Charlemagne. The maritime Teutons, from the earliest ages, were distinguished by their hardihood, their ardent passion for adventure, and their contempt of death. They navigated the dangerous seas of the North with more courage and freedom than the Greeks and Romans exhibited in the Mediterranean; they did not despair when they lost sight of land; they did not come to anchor when clouds obscured the stars. On board every vessel there was a cast of hawks or ravens, and, when the adventurers were uncertain in which direction the land lay, they let loose one of the birds,

knowing that he would make with instinctive sagacity for the nearest coast, and by his flight they steered their course.* Towards the close of the eighth century, the Normans became formidable as pirates to Western Europe; they particularly infested the coasts of Britain, Ireland, and France. Their leaders assumed the proud title of sea-kings; though the limits of each royalty did not extend beyond the deck of a single vessel, and all superiority was at an end when the expedition was over. A sea-king had only to announce his intention of undertaking some buccaneering enterprise, and he was sure to find crowds of adventurous youth ready to volunteer their services as his associates. Whither the adventurous sea-king should steer, provided that there appeared a reasonable chance of plunder, was a matter of perfect indifference to him and his associates. They effected a landing when least expected; no mercy was shown to age or sex; the fate of those who submitted or resisted was alike: but the special objects of their vengeance were the clergy and the churches, because they regarded themselves as the avengers of the insults offered to Odin, and of the persecutions with which Christian sovereigns afflicted his worshippers in their dominions. Sir Walter Scott has drawn the character of an ancient sea-king with so much poetic force and historic truth, that the extract will supersede the necessity of further description.

* Klaproth's Origin of the Compass, p. 17.

"Count Witikind came of a regal strain,
And roved with his Norsemen the land and the main.
Woe to the realms which he coasted! for there
Was shedding of blood and rending of hair,
Rape of maiden and slaughter of priest,
Gathering of ravens and wolves to the feast.
When he hoisted his standard black,
Before him was battle, behind him wrack;
And he burn'd the churches, that heathen Dane,
To light his band to their barks again.

On Erin's shores was his outrage known;
The winds of France had his banners blown;
Little was there to plunder, yet still
His pirates had foray'd on Scottish hill;
But upon merry England's coast
More frequent he sail'd, for he won the most.
So wide and so far his ravage they knew,
If a sail but gleam'd white 'gainst the welkin blue,
Trumpet and bugles to arms did call,
Burghers hasten'd to man the wall,
Peasants fled inland his fury to 'scape,
Beacons were lighted on headland and cape,
Bells were toll'd out, and, aye as they rung,
Fearful and faintly the Grey brothers sung
'Bless us, St. Mary, from flood and from fire,
From famine and pest, and Count Witikind's ire!'"*

Thierry has collected the principal characteristics of a sea-king from the Icelandic Sagas.† "He could govern a vessel as the good rider manages his horse, running over the oars whilst they were in motion.

* Harold the Dauntless, I.

† "They are rightly named sea-kings," says the author of the Yulinga Saga, "who never seek shelter under a roof, and never drain their drinking-horn at a cottage fire."

He would throw three javelins to the mast-head, and catch them alternately in his hand without once missing. Equal under such a chief, supporting lightly their voluntary submission and the weight of their coat of mail, which they promised themselves would soon be exchanged for an equal weight of gold, the pirates held their course gaily, as their old songs express it, along the track of the swans. Often were their fragile barks wrecked and dispersed by the North-sea storm; often did the rallying sign remain unanswered: but this neither increased the cares nor diminished the confidence of the survivors, who laughed at the winds and waves from which they had escaped unhurt. Their song in the midst of the tempest was

'The force of the storm helps the arms of our rowers,
The hurricane is carrying us the way which we would go.'" *

Nearly all the information which we possess respecting these formidable pirates is derived from the Sagas, or songs of the Skalds: these singular compositions are unlike any other form of literature; they are records of adventure in verse or measured prose, in which no notice is taken of historical events, and no regard paid to chronology. The Skalds, or bards, were more honoured by the Scandinavians than their priests; indeed, it is doubtful whether they had any regular sacerdotal caste or order. Some of their heroes prided themselves

* Thierry, ii. 1.

on defying the gods themselves; thus Gauthakor, when asked his religion by Olaf the saint, who was anxious to introduce Christianity among his countrymen, replied, "My brother in arms and I are neither Christians nor pagans. We have no faith but in our arms, and our strength to vanquish our enemies; and those we have ever found sufficient."* So far was the character of a pirate, or Vikingar, from being disgraceful, that it was eagerly sought by men of the highest rank,† and was only accorded to those who had given distinguished proofs both of their bravery in battle and their skill in navigation.‡ An ancient law enacted, that a man, in order to acquire glory for bravery, should attack a single enemy, defend himself against two, and not yield to three; but that he might without disgrace fly from four.

Every king, whether of sea or land, had a chosen band of champions called Kœmpe; warriors pledged to the personal service of their chief, and whose only hope of advancement arose from the

* Depping, i. 35.

† The title of klepht, or "robber," was equally honoured by the Greek mountaineers previous to the revolution.

‡ It is not many years since a Norwegian bishop, named Krogh, used to visit the islands and coasts in his diocese, clothed with the half-tanned skins of goats, generally alone in an open boat, which he piloted with equal skill and intrepidity through the most perilous shallows, rocks, and eddies of the Northern sea. This bishop was universally esteemed, and his memory is fondly venerated by those who were subject to his charge.

Poie, *Voyage en Norvège.*

performance of some exploit which common fame, and the songs of the Skalds, might spread over the North. Each sea-king laid down the rules for the government of his own champions, and fame was assigned to him whose regulations were the most strict and rigorous. Thus we are told that Half and Hiorolf, the sons of a Norwegian king, both devoted themselves to maritime adventure, or in plain terms to piracy. Hiorolf collected a great number of ships, which he manned with volunteers of every kind both of serfs and freemen; he was defeated in all his expeditions. On the other hand, his brother Half had only one ship, but his crew were all picked men. They were at first but twenty-three in number, all descended from kings; the troop was subsequently increased to sixty. Rigorous laws excluded from this heroic society every person who was under the age of eighteen, or over that of sixty. To obtain admission into the company, it was necessary that the champion should lift up a large stone which lay in the front of Half's residence, and which could not be moved by the force of twelve ordinary men. These champions were forbidden to take women or children, to seek a refuge during a tempest, or to dress their wounds before the battle was ended. Eighteen years Half's band carried terror to all the shores of Western Europe. Finally, when the sea-king was returning to enjoy the wealth he had acquired in tranquillity, his vessel, overladen with

plunder, appeared on the point of sinking, within sight of the Norwegian shore. The brave crew immediately drew lots to determine who should throw themselves into the sea for the purpose of saving their chief and the cargo: those on whom the lot fell, instantly jumped overboard, and swam to shore; while the vessel, relieved of the weight, reached the harbour in safety.*

Sometimes these warriors, like the Malays in Java, were seized with a kind of frenzy, either arising from an excited imagination, or from the use of stimulating liquors. In this state they were called "berserker,"† a word of frequent occurrence in the Sagas. Whilst under the influence of this madness, the champions committed the wildest extravagances; they danced about, foamed at the mouth, struck indiscriminately at friends and foes, destroyed their own property, and, like the mad Orlando, waged war against inanimate nature, tearing up rocks and trees. Sivald, king of Sweden, had five sons, all of whom became *berserker;* when the fit was on them, they used to swallow burning coals and throw themselves into the fire. They and their father were slain by Halfdan, whom Sivald had previously dethroned; the nation having become impatient of the extravagance of the frantic princes. Halfdan had a contest with an-

* Hist. Norveg. Forfæi, part i.

† According to the glossaries, a berserker signifies "a frantic warrior."

other berserker, named Hartben, who came to attack him, accompanied by twelve champions. Hartben was a formidable pirate; but, when the fit was on him, it was as much as his twelve companions could do to prevent him from devastating every thing around him. Halfdan challenged the pirate and his entire crew. Such an insult so inflamed Hartben, that he was immediately seized with a fit of frenzy, during which he killed six of his companions; he rushed against the king with the remaining six, but all the pirates were slain by the irresistible blows of the mace of Halfdan.* The sons of Arngrim, king of Heligoland, the most celebrated pirates of their age, are described as suffering severely from the berserk madness: when under its influence, they slaughtered their crews and destroyed their shipping; sometimes they landed on desert places, and vented their fury on stocks and stones. After the fit was over, they lay quite senseless from sheer exhaustion. †

A sea-king rarely condescended to the blandishments of courtship. If he heard of any noble or royal damsel celebrated for beauty, he at once demanded her from her father; and, if refused, equipped a vessel to take her away by force. He generally brought away, if successful, her dowry at the same time, and thus could boast of a double

* Saxo-Gram. Hist. Dan.

† Hervarar Saga, in the Copenhagen collection of 1785.

victory. A Swedish pirate, named Gunnar, having heard the Skalds celebrate the charms of Moalda, a Norwegian princess, sent to her father Regnald a peremptory demand of the fair lady's hand. Regnald rejected such a suitor with scorn; but, aware of the consequences of a refusal, he made instant preparations for defence. Before marching against the pirates, he had a cavern hollowed out in the mountains, within which he concealed the princess and his choicest treasures, leaving her a proper supply of provisions. Scarcely were his arrangements completed when the fierce Gunnar appeared off the coast. Regnald met the pirates on the shore; a desperate battle ensued, and the king was slain. After his victory Gunnar sought out the place where Moalda was concealed, and carried away the princess with her treasures to Sweden.* A second and a third conquest of this kind often followed the first, for polygamy was sufficiently common among these adventurers. The ladies, themselves, could not view with indifference heroes who risked their lives to obtain possession of their charms; and whose exploits, immortalized by the Skalds, were sung in all the islands and in all families.†

* Kianesinga Saga, Copenhagen collection.

† Jamieson has translated a ballad from the Kœmpe-Viser, which appears to prove that the pirates sometimes sold their female captives as slaves: "The

This enthusiasm for maritime adventure extended even to the fair sex. Ladies of exalted birth, led away by the example of their fathers and brothers, not only accompanied the pirates in their expeditions, but placed themselves at the head of marauding crews. A particular designation was devised by the Skalds for the young heroines who braved the dangers of the seas, and encumbered themselves with heavy armour. They are called, in the Sagas, Skjöld-meyar, that is, Maidens of the Shield; and numerous anecdotes are related of their exploits and heroism.

Alfhilda, the daughter of Siward, king of the Ostrogoths, was equally remarkable for her beauty, her chastity, and her bravery. She never appeared in public without a veil; and, whenever she retired to her apartment, two champions, of extraordinary prowess, mounted guard at the door. Siward had proclaimed that whoever aspired to the hand of his daughter should either slay these two champions or forfeit his own life. A young sea-king, named Alf, who had already distinguished himself by several piratical expeditions, resolved to hazard the

"The reivers they wad a stealing gang,
To steal sae far from hame;
And stown ha'e they the king's daughter,
Fair Annie hight by name.

"They carried her into fremmit lands,
To a duke's son of high degree,
And he has gi'en for fair Annie
Mickle goud and white money."

perilous adventure. He slew the two champions in single combat: but the courageous Alfhilda was not disposed to surrender herself so easily; she embarked with a troop of her ladies, all clothed and armed like men, and placed herself at the head of a band of pirates whose chief had been recently slain. The sea-queen soon became celebrated for her adventurous prowess and successful expeditions: the Skalds averred that the heroine had shown more courage, skill, and maritime knowledge than any sea-king of the age. Intelligence of her glorious exploits reached Alf, and filled him with indignation. He hastily equipped a fleet to pursue the fugitive princess; and, having conquered all the enemies that attempted to impede his course, reached the farthest extremity of the gulf of Finland, where the fleet of his mistress was stationed. Alfhilda was too courageous to allow herself to be blockaded; she led her vessels out of the harbour, and the two fleets were soon closely engaged. Alf grappled the sea-queen's ship and boarded it, accompanied by his companions-in-arms. The battle raged fiercely, hand to hand, on the deck: a blow from Alf's companion clove Alfhilda's helmet, which fell in pieces to the ground; but the sight of her beautiful features and flowing hair produced such an effect on the warriors, that they became mute with astonishment and dared no longer use their weapons. Alfhilda, conquered not less by the generosity than the valour of her lover,

gave him her hand: the battle was at an end; the nuptials were celebrated amid the rejoicings of both fleets, and Alf's companion was united at the same time to one of the attendants of the princess.*

A more romantic and more tragic legend relates the fate of Hagbarth and Signa. Four Norwegian princes, the sons of the king of Drontheim, whilst traversing the seas, encountered a fleet commanded by two Danish princes, the sons of king Sigar. A battle of course ensued; it lasted during the entire day, and the victory remained undecided. At length the Danish princes proposed a fraternal alliance with the four Norwegian brothers. It was not rare in those days for bitter hostility to be a preliminary to a warm and enduring friendship; the display of bravery in a battle, or in single combat, often won the esteem and friendship of an adversary, and caused their weapons to fall from the hands of heroes.†

After their reconciliation, the two fleets sailed together for the island of Zealand, where they were most hospitably received by Sigar, the father of the Danish princes. Hagbarth, the youngest of the Norwegian princes, gained the affection of Signa, the king's daughter; but her brothers opposed the match, declaring that he was not equal to her in rank. The Norwegians, enraged at this assertion,

* Volsunga Saga, Copenhagen collection.

† Numerous instances of such sudden reconciliations may be found in nearly all the Sagas.

rushed upon the Danish princes, and slew them in the presence of their father's court. After such a violation of hospitality, they could no longer remain in safety in Zealand, and they accordingly sailed homeward. Hagbarth's love for Signa, however, induced him to return; for they had plighted their troth to each other, and sworn to live or die together. Disguised as an old woman, he obtained admission into the palace; but was unfortunately recognized by one of the courtiers, who conveyed the intelligence to the king. The royal guards were immediately assembled, and sent to arrest Hagbarth: he defended himself with all the fury of despair, but was at length overpowered by numbers and taken prisoner. A council was convoked to decide on the fate of the Norwegian prince. One of the nobles proposed that he should be pardoned, recognized as the king's son-in-law, and entrusted with the defence of the realm; the majority, however, decided that he should be hanged as a murderer, and, according to some versions of the story, that, for greater indignity, the execution should be performed with "a widdie," or rope of twisted twigs. The princess, having learned that her lover was irretrievably lost, vowed not to survive him. When Hagbarth was brought out for execution in the front of the palace, the princess set fire to her apartment and threw herself into the flames. At the sight of this proof of devoted love Hagbarth prayed the executioners to hasten his

end, that he might the sooner be re-united to his beloved mistress in the world of spirits.*

The history of Hogna and Hedin may be quoted as another illustration of the character of the sea-kings or Northern pirates. Hedin, a Norwegian prince, highly distinguished for his maritime exploits in the seventh century, returning from a long expedition, claimed and received the hospitality of the Danish monarch Hogna. The two princes, charmed with the prowess which each displayed in martial exercises, vowed a fraternal affection, and publicly proclaimed themselves brothers in arms. After some time, while Hogna was engaged in a distant expedition, Hedin made a visit to his court, and persuaded the Danish princess to quit her father's house, and fly with him to Norway. The king of Denmark, who had destined his daughter's hand for some other suitor, was dreadfully enraged; he pursued the fugitives, and, having overtaken their bark, challenged Hedin to a single combat in some desert isle. The

* Dahlman, Recherches Historiques, ii. 292.—Jamieson has given a version of a very curious Danish ballad on the same subject. It thus begins:

"Fair Midel he serves in the king's palay;
He has lur'd the king's daughter, that bonny may.

The queen ca'd her daughter, and thus said she,
'And is it true they say about thee?

'Sae first in a widdie he 's hung, and then
The neist in a bale-fire thou sall bren.'"

duel lasted the entire day, with no decisive result: after the lapse of some years, however, they met again, and fell by each other's hands. For several centuries afterwards it was believed that these doughty heroes rose from their graves every night to renew the fearful combat; and the mariners who passed by the island imagined that they could hear the clashing of their swords, and the echo of the blows on their shields.*

The climate and soil of Scandinavia compelled the North-men to have recourse to piracy for subsistence. Their long winter, which changes at once into a brief spring, or rather summer,† is a serious impediment to the cultivation of corn; and the uncivilized Northerns of the early ages were reluctant to engage in agricultural toils which afforded no certain prospect of profit. Famines were of frequent occurrence, and left no resource to multitudes but immediate emigration to save them

* Saxo. Hist. Dan. lib v.—It was a singular custom amongst the Northern nations to fight their duels on the islands which abound on their coasts, and, on this account, a duel was called "holm-gange," *i. e.* an island meeting.—Helga, note 200.

† Oh! 'tis the touch of fairy hand
That wakes the spring of Northern land!
It warms not there by slow degrees
With changeful pulse the uncertain breeze;
But, sudden, on the wondering sight
Bursts forth the beam of living light,
And instant verdure springs around,
And magic flowers bedeck the ground.

W. Herbert.

from the agonies of painful and lingering death. Even now, Norway does not produce sufficient of the cerealia to support its scanty population; but its enlightened government has enabled commerce to compensate for the deficiencies of home-production, and freedom of trade has proved the only sure preventive of famine. In the reign of Sewa, one of the petty kings of Jutland, it is recorded that a famine was produced by the failure of the harvest, and that the king issued a proclamation forbidding the brewing of beer. This beverage was regarded as a necessary of life by his subjects, and the edict was disobeyed so generally that it was soon recalled. A national council was then convoked; and there it was proposed to slay all the old men and women, and all the children under the age of puberty. This frightful resolution, which could only have been dictated by the extremity of despair, would, in all probability, have been carried, but for the interference of Gunborg, a lady of exalted rank and the mother of a numerous family. She proposed that all the adults should cast lots, and that those on whom the lots fell should migrate to some foreign land. Young adventurers volunteered to supply the places of those who were too old to bear the fatigues of a voyage; and so extensive was the migration, that the ancient historians declare that a great portion of Jutland was thrown out of cultivation.*

* Depping, i. 14.

This scarcity of corn in Scandinavia explains the barbarous custom of exposing those children whom their parents were unable to nourish, a custom which was not abolished by the introduction of Christianity. The same cause may also account for the use of horse-flesh as food, to which the Icelanders were so attached that they expressly stipulated for permission to use such meat before they would submit to the introduction of the Christian religion.* Wace declares that it was a law in Denmark for nobles to give their estates to their eldest sons, and to send out the rest as adventurers to seek their fortunes.† Many of these outcasts acquired considerable wealth; but the amount of their plunder has been exaggerated by many modern writers, who have regarded the gold and silver ornaments mentioned in the Sagas as mere luxuries, and not as a substitute for coin. The gold and silver rings, bracelets, and anklets of the sea-kings, like the bangles still worn by the Hindoos, were a species of

* Mémoires de l'Acad. des Sciences de Copenhague, vol. iv.

† Costume fu jadis long temps
En Danemarche, entre les paiens,
Quand homme avait plusors enfanz,
Et il les avait norriz granz,
L'un des fils retenait par sort
Qui est son her après sa mort:
Et cil sur qui le sort tornait
En autre terre s'en alait.
Roman de Rou.

ring-money, and were, in fact, investments of capital. Those which have been dug up in the North, and in the Danish tombs in Ireland, are, for the most part, of very rude workmanship, and must have been valued more for the materials than for the beauty or delicacy of the manufacture.

Nature has supplied Norway and Sweden with abundant materials for constructing vessels. Their earliest boats were called holks or hulks, a word still preserved in our language, and were merely the trunks of trees hollowed out by fire or by some rude implements. One of these ancient hulks, found on the coast of Sussex, is preserved in the British Museum. These vessels were easily brought to land, and were launched with equal facility: they were frequently carried overland from the shores of the ocean to a lake, or to a river, which was otherwise of difficult passage; a manœuvre by which the Normans greatly perplexed the Franks during the siege of Paris. As the adventurers became more bold, and piracy proved more lucrative, the ships began to be enlarged, and some attention paid to their decoration. Several sea-kings possessed ships called "dragons," because they were moulded into a rude representation of that fantastic animal, and adorned with painting and gilding. The "dragon Grimsnoth," which king Rolf captured from some great pirate, was said to be as superior to all other

vessels as that monarch himself was to all the chiefs of Scandinavia.*

The art of working in iron appears to have been introduced into Norway and Sweden by some pagans of foreign race, who fled thither to avoid persecution, and was at first viewed as something supernatural. Hence arose the legend of Wayland the Smith, which has been naturalized in every country visited by the Normans.† The original tale, related in the Edda, declares that he was the son of an "Afra," or "sea-nymph," which is clearly but the mythological form of describing his foreign extraction.

Accompanied by his two brothers, he came from some distant land to chase the bears; they had great success in the valley of Ulfdal, and were so delighted with the abundance of game that they erected cottages for themselves on the shores of a lake near the hunting-ground. Here they had the good fortune one day to surprise three of the Valkyriur, or "Maids of Slaughter,"‡ who had

* Mém. de l'Acad. des Sciences de Copen. vol. viii.

† See, for the English version of the legend, the notes to Kenilworth, and an essay on Wayland Smith in the New Monthly Magazine, vol. iv. 527.

‡ Literally, "the choosers of the slain;" Gray calls them "the fatal sisters." The Valkyriur, in the Scandinavian mythology, correspond to the Destinies or Fates of the Greeks and Romans. It was their province to choose out those who were to fall in battle, to bear the invitation of Odin to the most distinguished warriors, and to pour out the beverage of the gods, ale or mead, for the souls of the heroes in Valhalla, the Northern

just laid aside their swan-dresses. They took these celestial beings as their wives; but, after having lived with them seven years, the Valkyriur, weary of peaceful life, made their escape to visit fields of slaughter. Two of the brothers pursued the fugitives, but Wayland remained in his cottage, where he devoted his attention to working in metals.

Niduth, the king of the country, having heard of the fame of Wayland's manufactures, entered the cottage during the owner's absence, and stole a beautiful ring; which, on his return home, he presented to his daughter. The queen, the princess, and her two brothers were charmed with the beauty of the ring; they represented to Niduth the importance of having such an admirable workman for a slave; and the king, yielding to their suggestions, surrounded Wayland's cottage during the night, made the smith a prisoner, and seized on all his property, including his famous sword, which was of such admirable temper that it would cut through the hardest rocks. Wayland was brought fettered to the court; but the queen conceived such a dislike to his appearance, that she persuaded the king to cut the sinews of his legs, and to confine him in a castle which all were forbidden to approach.

Paradise. In the daytime they generally appeared as swans, but this form was merely a dress which they could put on or take off at pleasure; and, hence, the brothers are said to have met them after they had laid aside their swan-garments.

Wayland secretly prepared for a dire revenge; like Dædalus of old, he manufactured wings to secure himself the means of escape, and kept them in readiness until he had matured all his plans. The princes were so delighted with some of the articles which Wayland had manufactured for their father, that they stole to his castle, and besought him to prepare some ornament or weapon for them. The smith promised compliance on condition of their keeping their visits a profound secret. He then seized an opportunity of murdering both, and, having buried their bodies, he fashioned their skulls into drinking-vessels set in silver, which he sent to the king. Their eyes he made the centres of two golden brooches, which he presented to the queen; and their teeth, formed into what appeared a pearl-necklace, were bestowed upon their sister Bandhilda. Some inquiry was made after the princes; but it was supposed that they had gone to the mountains in pursuit of game, or had undertaken some piratical expedition.

Soon after these events, Bandhilda accidentally broke the ring which Niduth had given her; and, dreading her father's resentment, she sent a messenger to Wayland, requesting him to repair the damage. The smith refused to do so, unless Bandhilda came to visit him in person. As this had been strictly forbidden, she came secretly and alone to the castle: Wayland then compelled her to become his concubine, and their illicit inter-

course was continued until it was impossible any longer to conceal the consequences.

His revenge being now complete, Wayland one morning put on his wings and flew to the palace, where he perched on the highest tower, and with a loud voice summoned the king to an immediate interview. Niduth obeyed, and was struck with horror when he learned the dire calamities which had befallen his family; he was, however, induced by the threats of Wayland to take a solemn oath that he would not injure Bandhilda, and that he would act the part of a faithful guardian to her son when born. This promise was faithfully fulfilled: Mimer, the son of Wayland and Bandhilda, became one of the most distinguished heroes of Northern romance, but it does not appear that he ever had an interview with his father. Wayland flew away, as some say, to Sweden; but, as others assert, to Jutland: his fame as an armourer spread abroad, and fortunate was the hero who could boast that he possessed a weapon fabricated by the "son of the sea." *

The legend of Wayland the Smith has no reference to navigation; but, from its treating the working of metals as a supernatural art, we may reasonably conclude that the use of nails and bolts in the construction of vessels was unknown,

* We have chiefly followed the version of Wayland's story given in the Edda, but have added a few circumstances necessary to its completion from the Vilkina Saga.

or else his fame as a ship-builder would have equalled his celebrity as an armourer. But it is obvious, that, until iron was employed in securing the planks and ribs, the ships constructed by the North-men must have been of small capacity; and hence we may account for the immense number of barks that formed fleets, without accusing the old historians of extravagant exaggeration.* At the famous naval battle of Bravalla, where all the naval forces of the Northern seas were assembled, the king of Sweden's fleet is said to have consisted of two thousand five hundred ships.

This battle was the result of a mutual defiance between Harald, king of Leira, and Sigund-Ring, who was a usurper of the Swedish throne.† By mutual consent, Bravalla, on the coast of Scania, was selected as the best place for deciding the challenge. When the news of the impending engagement was told in Norway and the other maritime countries, all the renowned sea-kings and all the distinguished champions of the North hastened to range themselves on one side or the other. The "maidens of the shield," some of whom ranked as sea-queens, showed the same alacrity

* The Finns appear to have been the first of the Northerns who undertook mining operations and forged iron. In the Sagas they are called "the dwarfs of the mountains," and their skill is attributed to magic.

† The battle, which there is no reason to believe a mere legend, was fought A.D. 735, and produced very important results in Northern history.

as the heroes, and hastened to bring their contingents, less through interest in the cause, than from a desire to distinguish themselves on an occasion which promised so much glory. Skalds went round to collect recruits, whom they animated by their wild songs, in which the savage deities of Scandinavian mythology were represented as inviting their children to hasten and share in the banquet of Death.* Two celebrated heroines joined the army of the king of Leira: Hetha,†

* Wild the Runic faith,
And wild the realms where Scandinavian chiefs
And Skalds arose; and hence the Skald's strong verse
Partook the savage wildness. And, methinks,
Amid such scenes as these the poet's soul
Might best attain full growth; pine-cover'd rocks
And mountain forests of eternal shade,
And glens and vales on whose green quietness
The lingering eye reposes, and fair lakes
That image the light foliage of the beech,
Or the grey glitter of the aspen leaves,
Or the still bough thin trembling.—SOUTHEY.

† The character of Hetha, in the Sagas, resembles that which Brynhilda gives of herself in Mr. Herbert's version of the legend of Sigund and Brynhilda:

'Mid the damsels of Hlyndale no maid was so fair,
So courted in bower, so dreaded in war.
Like a virgin of slaughter, I rov'd o'er the sea;
My arm was victorious, my valour was free;
By prowess, by Runic enchantment and song,
I raised up the weak and I beat down the strong.
I held the young prince 'mid the burly of war,
My arm wav'd around him the charm'd scimitar;
I sav'd him in battle, I crowned him in hall,
Though Odin and Fate had foredoom'd him to fall.

who commanded a hundred warriors tried in many naval engagements; and Visina, attended by a troop of Wends armed with long swords and narrow bucklers. Sclavonians, Livonians, and Saxons came to aid the Danes; and Harald was also joined by Ubbo, a famous pirate from Friseland. The number of champions in the Danish fleet amounted to seventy-four; but the Swedes counted ninety-six of these heroes in their ranks, and were further supported by the formidable archers of Norway. The victory soon declared in favour of the Swedes: Harald and fifteen kings were slain, as was also Ubbo of Friseland. Thirty thousand of the Danes and their auxiliaries were slain, and the Swede purchased his victory by the loss of twelve thousand of his bravest warriors. The conqueror interred the bodies of his enemies with great solemnity, and the mound in which the slain kings were buried is said to be still in existence in the vicinity of Leira.

The legends which we have selected form but a small part of the vast collection now before us, exhibiting a school of literature which has no parallel in the world. We have chiefly extracted those that serve to illustrate the manners and characters of the North-men, their bravery, their ferocity, and their barbarity, at the moment that they were about to quit the coasts of the Baltic sea, and extend their devastations over the West and South of Europe. It must, however, not be for-

gotten that they were preceded by the Vandals, the Visigoths, the Burgundians, the Saxons, and the Armorican confederacy, formed during the decline of the Western empire; for the Romans did not maintain a fleet in the Atlantic Ocean, never suspecting that the barbarians were acquainted with the art of navigation, or would venture into seas which the best mariners of Italy dreaded as the abode of monsters and dæmons.

CHAPTER VII.

Piratical incursions of the Sea-kings previous to their forming permanent establishments.

A TRADITION, which is partially confirmed by the authority of Tacitus, represents the Picts as originally a Germanic race. The oldest Irish annals make mention of strangers from the land of lakes (*Lochlin*), who settled in Ireland at various remote and uncertain periods; and, as this name was unquestionably given to Scandinavia, there can be no reason for doubting the Norwegian tradition that emigrants and adventurers from the Baltic had formed settlements on several of the British islands before their systematic piracies and migrations became of such importance as to merit a place in history. The earliest account of a piratical expedition into the British seas is contained in the death-song of Ragnar Lodbrok; he obtained, it is said, several victories in Scotland and England, which, however, appear to have been nothing more than the surprising of some towns and villages; but his adventures in Ireland are related with peculiar pride, for there they assumed the form of regular conquest.

"In heaps promiscuous was piled the enemy:
Glad was the kindred of the falcon;
They boded an approaching feast,
From the shouts which heralded the battle.
The body of the Irish king did not permit
(He being overwhelmed by the arrowy shower on his shield)
The wolves to be in want of food,
Or the ravens to feel the pangs of hunger.
Those who were slain at the gulf of Wedra*
Became the prey to the ravens.
We hew'd with our swords.

Numerous were the bands I saw
At morning's dawn slaughter'd
In the strife of spears and men.
The heart of my son was struck too soon
By a thorn issuing from its sheath;
It was Egil who struck down Regner,
And deprived the fearless youth of life.
Weapon thunder'd on our steel-proof armour,
Our pennons glisten'd in the skies.
We hew'd with our swords.

True to their promise, I saw hewing down,—
No sparing provision for the wolves,—
The sons of Endil with weighty swords.
Delightful was the strife at Scaia:†
As when the damsels bring the purple wine,
Red were our steeds that bound along the surge.
Often, amidst the crash and din of arms,
Was Skogul's‡ iron vesture cloven
In the strife of the gallant posterity of Skiold.§
We hew'd with our swords.

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* *Wedra-firdi*, that is, "the Bay of Storm;" it is now called Waterford, a name very little altered from the original Danish.

† *Scaia.*—Johnstone believes that this place is one of the Orkneys, but this is doubtful.

‡ *Skogul.*—The Northern Bellona, or goddess of war.

§ *Skiold-unga.*—The Danish monarchs claimed descent from Skiold the son of Odin.

Fainting beauteous in his curly locks,
I saw the lover of the maid at morning's dawn,
And the eloquent wooer of the widow.
As when the ministering Hebe
Hands the goblet of foaming wine,
Pleasant was the sight at Ila's strait.*
Ere king Arun was slain,
I saw his warding shield cloven,
And his chieftains gasping in death.
We hew'd with our swords.

We rais'd a concert of swords in the morning
In the south at Leinster; †
A struggle against three kings.
Few went joyous from that conquest,
Few could boast that they escap'd unhurt:
Many fell within the jaws of the wolf;
The falcon's offspring tore mangled limbs.
The blood of Erin, streaming from the dark,
Flow'd dark to the deep sea beneath.
We hew'd with our swords."

"The fertile Erin," says Johnstone, "was long the great resort of the Scandinavians, who, from the internal dissensions of the natives, gained considerable footing. They, however, met with a stubborn resistance. Hence the Islandic authors represent the Irish as most profuse of life, and the *Ira far* was no less terrible to the sons of Lochlin than the *furor Normannorum* to the rest of Europe. Some of the Norwegian kings were fond of imitating Irish manners, and one of them could

* *Ila's strait*, on the coast of Scotland.

† *Leinster*.—The same name is given by the Danes to Leinster and the island of Lindisfarne.

speak no language perfectly but Celtic. Several Runic pillars are inscribed to Swedes who fell in Erin." * The Danes established a kingdom in Ireland earlier than in any other part of Europe, and were earlier deprived of their supremacy. But they were not, as the Irish historians assert, totally exterminated, or expelled: they kept possession of the principal seaports, such as Dublin, Limerick, Wexford, and Waterford; they monopolized the commerce of the country, which the native Irish abandoned to them, either from ignorance of its value, or from their preference of a life of savage warfare.† The petty kings, or toparchs, among whom Ireland was divided, frequently entered into alliances with the foreigners, and enabled the Danes to recover a partial ascendancy; but the monotonous details given by the Irish historians are mere records of petty battles and savage plunder. In the beginning of the eleventh century a vigorous effort to expel the Danes was made by Brian Boru, the most justly celebrated of the na-

* Lodbrokar-Quida, note, p. 105.

† The barbarous feuds which continually divided the Irish septs must have prevented the country from making any advance in civilization. Learning was confined to the monasteries, and the quality of ecclesiastical literature in the middle ages was far from being calculated to improve the nation in which it was cultivated. No stronger proof can be given of the light causes from which sanguinary contests originated in Ireland than that one of the wars, most celebrated by the Irish bards, arose from a hen-egg being set before a haughty prince instead of a goose-egg.

tive kings of Ireland: he obtained a decided victory at Clontarf, but he was slain by a marauding party of stragglers while offering thanksgivings to God for his success, and the dissensions which followed his death prevented the Irish from profiting by his success.*

The islands to the north and west of Scotland were probably occupied by the North-men before they began to make regular settlements either in Britain or Ireland. Nature herself seems to have formed the Orcadian archipelago to be the haunt of the sea-kings: the islands abound in bays and harbours, where fleets of small vessels may easily be sheltered and concealed; their aspect, climate, and productions are so similar to those of Scandinavia, that the pirates might have regarded them as a portion of their native land; and their limited size enabled them to be defended by the small bands which usually accompanied the maritime adventurers. In consequence of the pirates being thus spread over the Northern and Western seas, their depredations could not be guarded against, even by the most scrupulous vigilance; the only means by which their ravages could be prevented would have been to fit out a fleet and attack them in their insular retreats: but neither the Anglo-Saxons nor the Franks paid any attention

* The battle of Clontarf is the subject of Gray's ode, "The Fatal Sisters," which has been translated from one of the Sagas.

to naval affairs; they often repelled invasions, but they never adopted proper precautions for their prevention. The struggle between the Danes and Anglo-Saxons* is sufficiently familiar to all readers of English history; we shall, therefore, confine our attention to the achievements of the Northerns in France and Southern Europe up to the period of their obtaining possession of Neustria.

There were many among the councillors of Charlemagne who recommended him to complete his conquest of the Saxons and Frisians by pursuing those who had escaped from his yoke and establishing Christianity in Scandinavia; but thirty years of war with the Saxons had taught Charles the difficulty of establishing religion by force among nations proud of their independence, and remarkable for their sense of personal dignity. He even refused permission to St. Ludger, a Frisian missionary, to go and preach the Gospel to the Danes; either because he dreaded to rouse again the fury of pagan fanaticism, or feared to be involved in a new war if any insult was offered to the zealous missionary.†

Louis-le-Débonnaire pursued a new course of policy: he proffered largesses and estates to those pagans who should embrace Christianity; and, as

* The Anglo-Saxons came originally from Denmark, and were not regarded as enemies by the North-men until after they had been converted to Christianity.

† Alfridi Vita Sancti Ludgeri.

religion generally sat lightly on the corsair, his zeal could soon boast of a great number of converts. An anecdote related by the Monk of St. Gall may serve to illustrate the value of these interested conversions:—It was the custom of the time that adult candidates for baptism should present themselves at the font in white robes. On one occasion so many Norman neophytes came together, that a proper supply of robes could not be obtained, and it was necessary to make them of such coarse stuffs as came readiest to hand. One of these was presented to a Norman nobleman who offered himself for baptism, but he rejected it with indignation. "Keep," said he, "your sackcloth for clowns; this is the twentieth time that I have been baptised, and I never was insulted by being offered such rags before."* The North-men appear to have abstained from molesting France during the reign of Louis, probably because they found that bribes were not less lucrative than booty. But they did not abandon their marauding expeditions into Southern Europe: they ravaged the coast of Spain; and, though defeated by the king of Leon with the loss of ten ships, they sailed round to the Mediterranean, entered the Guadalquivir, and devastated the country round Seville. The Saracens must have been astonished at the appearance of the Northern sea-kings, their rivals in the arts of piracy and plunder. So simi-

* De reb. bell. Car. Mag. ii. 19.

lar, indeed, were the hordes from the South, and the robbers from the North, in character, that many of the old French writers believed the Normans to be a tribe of the Saracens! *

The pirates are called "Majús" by the Arabian historians; a name, indeed, which they bestow indiscriminately on all the Northern nations. The following account of the ravages of the sea-kings is given by An-muvari:

"In the year 230 the Majús went out of the remote districts of Andalus against the territory of the Moslems. They first showed themselves at Lisbon in Dhí-l-hajjah of the year 229 (July or Aug. A. D. 912). After remaining in that city for about thirteen days, during which time they had many severe battles with the Moslems, they marched to Káyis (perhaps Cadiz), and thence to Shidúnah (Sidonia), where they fought a great battle with the Moslems. From thence they advanced against Seville, where they arrived on the 8th of Moharram (Sept. 24, A. D. 912), and encamped at twelve parasangs from that city. Four days after, on the 12th of Moharram (Sept. 28), the Moslems went out against them, but they were defeated with great slaughter. The Majús then came closer to the city, and encamped at the distance of two miles from it. Again did the citizens of Seville go out to fight the enemy; but they were a second time defeated with great loss in killed and

* Depping, i. 4.

prisoners, and the sword of the Május was not lifted either from man or beast until they actually gained possession of Seville. This last defeat happened on the 14th day of Moharram (Sept. 30). After staying in Seville one day and one night, the Majús departed to their ships.

"Meanwhile the troops of the sultán were marching against them; which being known by the Május, they went forward to meet them, and a bloody conflict ensued: but the Moslems, having summoned all their courage, fought with desperation, and drove them to their ships, after slaying about seventy of their number. The Moslems allowed them to embark unmolested, and withdrew from them. Soon after another body of troops, sent by the Amír 'Abdu-r-rahmán, made its appearance in the same districts; upon which the Majús [left their ships and] attacked them with great fury, and obliged them to retreat. The Moslems, however, returned to the attack and fought with them a second time. Provisions came in from every district, and the army was swelled by volunteers: the Majús were attacked and defeated with the loss of about five hundred men, and four of their vessels, which, after being emptied of all their valuables, were set on fire.

"The Majús then went to Leslah, and surprised Shinebá. They landed on an island close to Cadiz, where they proceeded to divide the spoils which they had taken; but, whilst they were thus en-

gaged, the Moslems sailed up the river and killed two of their men. From thence the Majús marched to Shidúnah, where they arrived by night, taking possession of all provisions and stores they found, and making captives of the inhabitants. The Majús remained two days at Shidúnah: but, hearing that 'Abdu-r-rahmán's fleet had arrived at Seville, they proceeded to Niebla, which they surprised and sacked; thence they went to Ossonoba, thence to Beja, and lastly to Lisbon. This place was the last where they committed their ravages; for they sailed away, and nothing more was heard of them for some time." *

A second invasion of the North-men is mentioned by the same author:

"In the year 245 the Majús went out in their ships to Andalus: they reached as far as Seville, and set fire to its mosque; they then crossed over to Africa, and, after plundering the cities on that coast, returned to Andalus and landed [on the coast of Murcia]. Having defeated the people of Tadmír in an encounter, they took the castle of Orihuela: they made incursions, took plunder and several prisoners; after which they set sail and went away. They were, however, attacked at sea by Al-hammed's fleet, which took two of their vessels and sank two more. The Majús, irritated at their loss, renewed the attack, when several Moslems died martyrs for the faith [in the conflict].

* Gayangos' Mohammedan Dynasties of Spain, ii. 432.

The ships of the Majús sailed on their course until they reached Barcelona, which they surprised; making its king, Garcia the Frank, their prisoner. Garcia, however, obtained his liberty by paying ninety thousand dinárs for his ransom." *

The rapid decline of the mighty empire founded by Charlemagne has been usually attributed to the feebleness of his successors, and to the custom of dividing and subdividing dominions among all the children of each sovereign. Without denying that these causes produced very injurious effects, we are convinced that the system established by the emperor of the West contained within itself the elements of speedy destruction; the tree was cankered at the heart, and, the more flourishing its foliage appeared externally, the more rapid was the unseen progress of decay within. In the laws and capitularies of this mighty sovereign we find precious glimpses of the causes which rendered the final result of a reign, signalized by the most brilliant victories, to be such a state of debility, or rather of total exhaustion, that no country over which Charles had reigned was able to resist the most despicable enemies. During his reign an immense social revolution was effected, which, being unaccompanied by any violence, has scarce left any trace in history, save its distant and lamentable consequences. The free peasants and cultivators of the soil were silently deprived of their liberty

* Gayangos' Mohammedan Dynasties of Spain, ii. 435.

throughout the territories of the Franks, and reduced to the condition of serfs or slaves. Slavery* having been once introduced, and protected by laws, every increase in national prosperity and the accumulation of wealth was followed by the disappearance of the smaller proprietors, the absorption of their lands into larger estates, the multiplication of slaves, and the absolute cessation of every labour which was not performed by servile hands. If we look back to ancient history, we shall find that the success of Rome resulted from the very contrary cause. In spite of the resistance of the patricians, the tribunes of the people by various agrarian laws succeeded in creating an agricultural population of small landed proprietors, who formed the yeomanry of Italy, and, while their class existed, rendered the republic and the empire victorious abroad and impregnable at home. That country is foredoomed to revolution and destruction in which legislative difficulties impede the acquisition of small estates, and encourage the accumulation of extensive domains in a few hands. When the free yeomanry of Italy disappeared to make room for slaves, the country was at the mercy of every invader; for when did slaves feel any active interest in a contest

* We have used the word *slavery* in preference to the more appropriate term, "serf-dom," because many historical students are inclined to suppose that the condition of a serf was superior to that of an absolute slave: it would be easy to show, that, in many particulars, the serfs of the middle ages were worse off than the negroes in the most rigid period of West Indian slavery.

the worst issue of which could be merely a change of masters?*

Every time that France or Gaul became the prey of a new conquest, a certain number of vigorous soldiers established themselves on the soil, who did not despise farming industry, but were willing to exchange the sabre for the spade: the sons of these soldiers, however, feeling from their birth that they belonged to an ascendancy, regarded industrial pursuits as the characteristic of the vanquished and slave population; they ceased to labour, and, if they could not support themselves in idleness, they sold their little heritage to some powerful neighbour, adopted the profession of arms, and soon disappeared.† The smaller properties were consequently absorbed in the large estates, and the new purchaser supplied the place of the free cultivators by increasing the number of his slaves. Thus the free yeomanry established by Clovis had disappeared in the reign of his grandchildren; the new pro-

* After the Mohammedan empire had been established in Northern India, it was not unusual, during the many wars of disputed succession between the descendants of Baber, for the Hindoos to look upon a battle as unconcerned spectators, and to feel so little interest in the result as not to inquire the name of the victor.

† This has been, to a great extent, the result of the Cromwellian system in Ireland. The Lord Protector had no means of compelling the families of his soldiers to keep the lands which he had bestowed upon them; and, in the second generation, most of the original Cromwellian settlers had lost their lands by sheer idleness and profligacy.

prietary introduced by Charles Martel met a similar fate during the reign of Charlemagne; and nearly the whole surface of ancient Gaul was cultivated by slaves alone. This was, however, a revolution of property rather than of person; the families of the Franks, for the most part, became extinct, though some few of them must have descended to the servile state; and thus the ascendancy of the conquering race was constantly falling in its relative proportions to the subject population.* Purchase, exchanges, and absolute resignations of their heritages by the smaller proprietors, effected a far greater change in the landed property of France than the sword itself could have accomplished.†

The more that Charlemagne extended his conquests, the more land he acquired to gratify his officers and his courtiers; but their ambition increased in at least the same proportion, and larger grants were demanded at every fresh acquisition. In the ideas of the men of that age, sovereignty itself was so connected with property, that each

* Sismondi, ii. 274.—The same fact is painfully obvious in Irish history: at every successive census the number of Protestants is found to form a rapidly diminishing proportion of the population.

† But for the laws which render the transfer and exchange of land difficult in these countries, the same result would have been even more conspicuous in Ireland. It would astound many statesmen to see how few of the estates assigned by the acts of settlement and explanation are possessed by the families of those to whom they were originally assigned.

of the duchies, counties, and lordships which the emperor granted to his captains was regarded, not only as a government, but, to a great extent, as a patrimony more or less covered with slaves, who worked for the exclusive benefit of their master.* No family now exists in France which can trace back its origin to the days of Charlemagne, and consequently the charters of grants made to individuals have disappeared; but the muniments of the monasteries, convents, and churches have been much better preserved, and they afford indisputable proof of the servile condition of the cultivators of the soil. The grants of land made direct by the king assign over to the church, not only the estates, but "all their inhabitants, their houses, their slaves, their meadows, their fields, and all their goods and chattels." Charters were also given to confirm donations made by other princes or nobles, and these contain clauses prohibiting "the royal com-

* In Ireland this feudal principle was reversed, and it was held that the possession of property by the Protestant ascendancy necessarily conferred the exclusive right of government and legislation. The penal laws were the result; they have, however, been generally attributed to fanaticism rather than policy: but in truth they were only nominally connected with religion, that sacred name was only introduced to conceal very different motives; but it enabled the legislators to impose not only on others, but themselves.—We must apologize for the digressive character of this and the three preceding notes; but we deem that the comparison exhibits a very striking example of identity of results from identity of causes, in different ages and countries, which the simple change of name conceals from general notice.

missioners and judges from exercising any authority or jurisdiction in the towns and districts belonging to the church."*

Alcuin, the Anglo-Saxon scholar to whom France is deeply indebted for the revival of literature and science, received several rich boons from Charlemagne, but could not have been raised to the same level as the peers and prelates of the court; yet we find that he possessed no less than twenty thousand slaves to till the lands which had been assigned to him by his imperial benefactor. Though large estates had been alienated to captains, courtiers, and churches, vast tracts of land belonged to the crown, and were the principal source of the sovereign's revenue. There is still preserved a curious capitulary, issued by Charles before he became emperor, regulating the administration of the crown lands, which has been often quoted as an exemplification of his love of order and œconomy. It is, however, still more valuable for the information it affords respecting the condition of the royal serfs; it lays down rigid rules for all the details of their domestic life, it places every action under the control of stewards having the title of judges, and it deprives the labourers at once of all freedom and of all hope. In order to make suitable provision for their master and his court, Charles prescribes to them what different occupations should be pur-

* D. Boquet, v. 756.

sued, and what varieties of crops should be cultivated. No choice was left to the serf; his labour was prescribed to him, and the rod of the superintendent was ready to punish neglect or disobedience.*

It must not be forgotten that the landed proprietors alone constituted the nation; for the serfs in law, and, we might almost say, in fact, were just of the same importance as so many head of cattle. The free proprietors alone were rich, were independent, were consulted on public affairs, were allowed a share in the national councils, and they alone were entrusted with the use of arms.† Their number, probably, surpassed that of the landed proprietors of England, who, to some extent, may be regarded as similarly in possession of the sovereignty as well as the soil of the country; and it is not difficult to predict what would be the result of an invasion, if the defence of our land should be entrusted solely to the squires, unassisted by soldiers from any other class of society. Thousands of gentlemen, lost amidst millions of brutalized slaves, who belonged not to the nation, to

* Sismondi, ii. 278.

† The tenure of land created by the feudal system was so far equitable, that it threw the expenses of the state, both civil and military, on the landed proprietors, and thus the taxation of the country was in fact the head-rental of the country; but in every European country the holders of estates have always endeavoured to evade this primary condition of their tenure, and to shift the burthen of taxation from landed property to manufacturing industry.

the country, and scarcely to humanity itself, could effect but little for preserving to France its laws, its power, or its freedom.

The slave-trade added its horrors to those of slavery. Soon after the emperor had conquered Italy, and bestowed upon the popes most of the provinces which he had wrested from the Lombards, an edifying controversy arose between the pontiffs and the imperial governors of provinces respecting the right of jurisdiction in the ceded districts. The Lombard dukes openly accused the Head of the Church of sanctioning the scandalous traffic in Christian slaves which the Saracens had established on the coast of Italy. They informed Charles, that, far from having effected anything towards the salvation of his soul by his large donations to the Church, on the contrary they insisted that he had rendered himself responsible for the souls of thousands of Christians, who had been sold from these ceded estates to the Saracens, and seduced into apostacy by their new masters. Charles, who seems to have entertained some doubts of the wisdom of his very extravagant grants, wrote a very strong remonstrance to the court of Rome on the subject, and received the following reply, which affirms the existence of this infamous slave-trade, while it denies that the guilt of it could fairly be imputed to the priesthood.

"Our attention," says pope Adrian, "has also been directed to what you have said on the sale

of slaves. You have written as if we Romans were the persons who sold slaves to the infamous race of Saracens; but God forbid that we should have taken part in such an atrocious crime, to which we have not even given our consent! The execrable Greeks, who carry on their commerce along the Lombard coast, and with whom the Lombards have a secret understanding, are the managers of the trade in Christian slaves. We ourselves have summoned duke Allo to collect his fleet, to seize the Greeks and to burn their ships; but he has not thought fit to obey our orders: and, as we possess neither ships nor sailors, it is quite out of our power to interfere with those engaged in this infamous traffic. Nevertheless, in order to hinder this crime as far as we could, we have caused all the Greek ships in our harbour of Centum Cellæ *(Civita Vecchia)* to be burned, and we have for a long time kept the Greeks who were on board in prison. It is true that the Lombards have sold a great number of slaves, and that many of the Lombards have themselves gone voluntarily on board the Greek vessels, because they had no other means of preserving their lives. Your highness may be well assured that none of our priests, notwithstanding the charges made against them, have ever sullied themselves by participating in such an atrocious crime." *

* Sismondi, ii. 284.—Adrian's disclaimer proves nothing: and it is certain, that, during the middle ages, no lands were worse

In Italy, the principal slave-dealers, if we are to believe the pope, were the Lombards and the Greeks. North of the Alps, the principal agents in this traffic were the Jews, who in that age possessed a greater command of bullion and ready money than any other body of men in the empire. They had sufficient influence to obtain from Louis-le-Débonnaire an edict, enjoining that slaves should not be baptized without the consent of their owners; and, as the prelates of the Gallican church were all-powerful in the court of this feeble sovereign, it is impossible that such a law would have been established without their consent. The protests of the inferior clergy finally compelled the revocation of this infamous edict;* but, while the law enacted harsh penalties against the Jewish purchasers of Christian slaves, it allowed the still more guilty venders to escape with impunity. The serfs, under these circumstances, lost all regard for religion; and many of the peasants who lived on the sea-coast adopted the ancient idolatry of Germany, professing themselves worshippers of Odin, for the purpose of conciliating the Normans.

There are some reasons for believing that the Jews were not less disposed to favour the invasion of France by the Normans than that of Spain by the Saracens. Though, in general, kindly treated

cultivated, and no serfs more harshly treated, than those belonging to the Church.

* Pagi, Critica, 537—539.

by the monarchs of the Carlovingian line, they were constantly exposed to the hostility of the clergy, who ostentatiously set royal edicts at defiance, and stimulated the fanaticism of the people to acts of violence. Charles the Bold ordained that Jews should have the same trading privileges as the Christians, on condition of paying the tenth of their profits, while the Christians paid only the eleventh: his physicians, his banker, and several of his financiers were Hebrews; but their skill in devising taxes tended not a little to increase the popular prejudice against their race. Relying on the king's favour, they presented a petition to be relieved from the annual insult offered them at Toulouse:* the duke of Aquitaine and the archbishop of Narbonne were appointed to inquire into the matter; but, before they could prepare a final report, the death of the emperor deprived the Jews of their protector, and they continued to expiate the real or supposed treason of their ancestors for more than a century.†

Throughout Western Europe a general persecution of the Jews formed an essential part of the ceremonies of the Holy Week. In many cases the magistrates, in order to prevent riot, forbade them to appear in public during the three days preceding Easter Sunday. Evil was the fate of those who disobeyed the precept: but in many cases this seclusion

* See before, page 199.

† Basnage, Histoire des Juifs, vol. ix.

afforded no protection; licentious mobs attacked their houses with stones, and no efforts were made by the clergy or the magistracy to check these outbreaks of fanaticism.

The record of what was usual at Beziers sufficiently shows that the Christians of this age outraged every precept of religion and humanity in their conduct to the Jewish people. Beziers contained a great number of Hebrews who ranked amongst the most wealthy and respectable of the population; but, nevertheless, they were annually exposed to an odious persecution. Every Palm-Sunday the bishop mounted the pulpit, and addressed the congregation in the following terms: "You have around you the descendants of the people that crucified Jesus Christ, whose passion we are now beginning to celebrate. Faithful to the custom of your ancestors, arm yourselves with stones, and avenge to the utmost of your power the injuries and insults offered to your Redeemer." He then gave his benediction to the multitude, never disinclined to follow such advice; they armed themselves with stones, the only weapons allowed to be used on such occasions, assailed the houses of the Jews, and ill-treated any individuals who were so unfortunate as to fall into their hands.* As the invasions of the Normans increased, the persecu-

* Collection des Historiens de France, vol. xii.—In 1160 the Jews purchased the abolition of this cruel and absurd custom from Raymond viscount de Beziers.

tions of the Jews were multiplied, until at length Charles the Simple made a grant to the archbishop and clergy of Narbonne of all the property possessed by the Jews in that diocese, and further added the gift of the Jews themselves as slaves to the churches.* This singular form of donation was frequently repeated by the monarchs of France and Germany; and hence, if the Jews did not actually invite invaders, they had very little reason to exert themselves in the defence of the country.

The battle of Fontenay, between the sons of Louis the Débonnaire, hastened the fall of the empire of the Franks; the best and bravest of their soldiers fell in this murderous combat, and all the contemporary writers declare that it was in consequence of this frightful carnage that the Normans were enabled to extend their ravages with impunity:

> The flower of France was there cut down,
> Her boldest lords and knights o'erthrown;
> And thus the pagans found a way
> To make the naked land their prey.†

In the very same year that the battle of Fontenay was fought, the Norman pirates, under the command of a chief named Asker, ascended the Seine,

* Historiens de France, vol. ix.

† La perit de France la flor,
Et des barons tuit li plusor;
Ainsi troverent paiens terre
Vuide de gent et bonne à conquerre.
Roman de Rou.

plundered and burned Rouen, pillaged the convents and monasteries on both sides of the river; while a body of Franks, left for the protection of the coasts, was either too weak or too cowardly to check their depredations. As the monks fled with the sacred relics across the country, they spread universal consternation: the people, seeing that the bones of the saints, to which they attributed supernatural power, had proved ineffectual to protect their own shrines, despaired of obtaining success by any human means. Had the ecclesiastics appealed to fanaticism, they might have excited a spirit of resistance which the North-men could not have overcome; and this was actually done at Tours. Soon after the pirates had quitted the banks of the Seine, another division of marauders ascended the Loire, burned the town of Amboise, and ravaged all the country between the Loire and the Cher. They then laid siege to Tours; but the inhabitants, encouraged by the clergy to repose confidence in their tutelary saint, made a vigorous resistance, and were daily animated by seeing the relics of St. Martin borne in procession round the walls. After having vainly hazarded several assaults, the Normans raised the siege, and were severely harassed in their retreat by the gallant citizens of Tours. No historian or poet has celebrated the bravery of those citizens; the whole merit of their success was attributed to the relics of St. Martin and the prayers of the clergy.

The piracies and plunderings of the celebrated Hastings, who devastated the coasts of France, Spain, and Italy, have probably been greatly exaggerated; there is no doubt, however, that he was the most formidable of the adventurers who had yet issued from the North, for he loved destruction even when it was unattended with profit. The chroniclers assert that he might have conquered the whole of France, had not Charles the Bald bribed him by large sums to forbearance. Considerable uncertainty rests upon the origin of this most formidable of freebooters: he has been claimed for Norway, for Sweden, and for Denmark by the historians of the several countries;* but, as he declared himself to be a Dane, we see no reason for seeking any further authority. His associate and brother-in-arms† was Biœrn, the son of Ragnar Lodbrok,

* Ralph Glauber, a chronicler of the eleventh century, asserts that Hastings was the son of a serf in the vicinity of Troyes, and that he had fled to the North for the purpose of escaping from the atrocious slavery in which the peasants were held by the barons. Although the legend appears to rest on no sure foundation, it has been adopted by many judicious writers, who regard with a kind of stern satisfaction the dreadful retribution which he exacted from the Frankish ascendancy for the wrongs done to his race.

† Nothing could exceed the romantic attachment of these Northern warriors, who had associated themselves by a solemn compact of friendship, which was sanctified by the superstitious ceremony of drawing blood from their body, and mingling it in token of their inviolable union. They were called "Stallbrodre." It was not unusual upon those occasions to pledge themselves mutually not to survive each other; and the obligation of

whose death-song has been quoted in a preceding page. Biœrn, according to the legends, was surnamed Ironside, because his mother had rendered all his body invulnerable, save the right side, by means of magical spells, and that side he had protected by plates of iron. These pirates are said to have seized on the island of Noirmoutiers,* on the coast of Brittany, as a maritime depôt and a convenient place for storing plunder. Having thus acquired a convenient rendezvous, their depredations became more continuous and systematic; Gas-

suicide, which had been so contracted, was invariably fulfilled. A singular circumstance of this nature is said to have happened in the reign of Frode the Third. Asnit and Asmund, two warriors of distinction, had bound themselves by such an engagement. Asnit died of an accidental illness, and his body, together with those of his horse and dog, were let down by a rope into a deep cavern; and Asmund, who had sworn not to live after him, descended also into the abyss with a considerable store of provisions. A long time after, Eric, the son of Regner, passing with his army, determined to ransack the tomb of Asnit in search of the provisions which were supposed to be concealed in it, and a strong young man was let down into the cave in a basket suspended by a rope. Asmund, who was still living, easily overpowered the man, who was terrified at his appearance; and, jumping into the basket, was drawn up from the bottom of the dungeon: and the men of Eric, seeing his long hair, and nails, and squalid appearance, and thinking that he was the spirit of the dead whose tomb they were violating, fled with the utmost horror and consternation. Asmund probably considered himself to be released from the obligation of his vow by this unexpected resurrection, especially as he had left a substitute in the cavern.

* This island was similarly occupied by the royalist insurgents in the war of La Vendée.

cony, in particular, suffered severely from their depredations: so many of the clergy were either slain or put to flight, that the laws of the Church ceased to be observed, and the tithes were seized by the lords of the soil in spite of the angry remonstrances of the Vatican.

In the midst of these calamities, the monks encouraged the people by romantic tales of miracles, performed in various parts, by which bands of pirates had been forced away by storms or repulsed by the soldiers of the Church. In allusion to this confidence in relics, the sea-king Regnier, after his return to Denmark, declared that "France was a land without courage, in which the dead were more formidable than the living." * Amongst these miracles, the most important was the conversion of the formidable Hastings, who grew weary of adventure as old age came on, and was anxious to obtain some tranquil spot where the close of his life might be spent in security.† So great

* Depping, i. 184.

† Sir Walter Scott has applied these facts in the life of Hastings to his fictitious Count Witikind, in Harold the Dauntless:

> The count found his armour full heavy to bear,
> Wrinkled his brow grew, and hoary his hair;
> He lean'd on a staff when his step went abroad,
> And patient his palfrey when steed he bestrode.
> As he grew feebler, his wildness ceas'd,
> He made himself peace with prelate and priest;
> Made his peace and stoop'd his head,
> Patiently listed the counsel they said. . . .

Broad

an advantage did the prospect of appeasing Hastings seem, that Charles the Bald assembled his grand council to deliberate on the best means that could be found for conciliating this Norman, and engaging him to devote the rest of his life to the protection of the realm which he had so often devastated. The conduct of the negociations was entrusted to the abbot of St. Denis and several of the most eminent prelates of France. Hastings was difficult to be convinced, for he had resolved to set a high price on his conversion; but, having received a large sum of money and a grant of the county of Chartres, he yielded to the arguments of the missionaries, presented himself at the court, and received baptism.*

Hastings had not been long conciliated before another chief, equally brave, but more politic and less cruel, came to seek an establishment in France. Hrolf, or, as the French called him, Rollo, was the son of a Norwegian prince, who had been compelled to leave his country for some political offence. As he was a chief of approved valour, he easily enlisted a number of adventurers ready to take a part in the exploits of his exile. He first

> Broad lands they gave him on Tyne and Wear,
> To be held of the Church by bridle and spear,
> Part of Monkwearmouth, of Tynedale part,
> To better his will and to soften his heart:
> Count Witikind was a joyful man,
> Less for the faith than the lands he wan.

* Dudon de St. Quentin, Hist. Norm. i.

invaded Scotland, and thence proceeded to England, which was at that time enjoying an interval of repose under the glorious administration of Alfred. Having been defeated in England, he entered into alliance with Alfred, and, passing over to France, took possession of Rouen; the inhabitants consenting to receive him as their sovereign. "Then did Rollo assemble the people of the city and country, and said that he wished to dwell there and make it his principal residence; and they said that Hastings had greatly harassed them and still continued to do so, and that they had no one who could give them protection. They also declared, that, if he would undertake to be their defender, they would recognize him as their chief and liege lord."* From this statement it is evident that the citizens of Rouen did not regard Rollo as an ordinary pirate; they had probably heard the fact of his having been exiled, and, as he could no more return to Norway, they hasted to offer him a permanent habitation. The walls of Rouen were re-built and strengthened with several new forts, and an extensive district on each side of the Seine submitted to the stranger.

Charles the Simple and Eudes were too deeply engaged in civil war to pay any attention to the establishment of a Norman dynasty at the mouth of one of the principal rivers in the kingdom. Both, indeed, opened negociations with Rollo, but

* Depping, ii. 72; from a MS. in the royal library of Paris.

the menaces of the archbishop of Rheims prevented either from entering into an alliance with pagans. Soon afterwards, Charles, being left without a rival, set the Normans at defiance, and levied an army, which he entrusted to the command of Ragnold, duke of France and Orleans, for the protection of his realm. Rollo, irritated at the interruption of the negociations, ascended the Seine as high as Pont-de-l'Arche, where he found Ragnold posted with the best warriors of the Franks, and supported by Hastings, who had brought his contingent to the royal forces as count of Chartres.*

Ragnold summoned Hastings to a council of war, and asked for his advice: the count of Chartres recommended that deputies should be sent to learn the precise objects of the invaders, and he with two others was entrusted with this mission. The conference was held in a singular manner: the three deputies proceeded to the bank of the river Eure, which separated them from the invaders, and shouted out, "Who are you? whence come you? what do you want?"—The reply was sufficiently laconic: "We are Danes come hither to

* The Norman historians, Dudon, Jumièges, and Wace, agree in their accounts of this campaign; but M. Licquet, in his recent work on Norman history, shows that there is some reason to doubt the accuracy of the details. Without going to the full extent of his scepticism, we may receive the narrative as one in which a desire to flatter the dukes of Normandy has led the historians to add a little invention to the simple facts.

subdue France." — "What is the name of your chief?"—"We have no chief, we are all equal."—"Have you ever heard mention of your countryman Hastings, who came hither with a numerous fleet?"—"Yes; he began well and ended badly."—"Are you willing to submit yourselves to the king of France? He will bestow rich boons upon you."—"We will never submit to anybody; we will accept no boons; we will be indebted only to our arms and our valour."—"What do you intend to do?"—"Be off, if you value your safety! we will not reveal our plans."

On his return, Hastings counselled Ragnold to avoid a battle; but this advice was attributed to treachery, and he was obliged to quit the army. He is said to have sold his county of Chartres to the count of Champagne, and then to have abandoned France. Rollo, expecting to be attacked, fortified his camp: he was soon assailed by the royal army; but the Franks exhibited neither courage nor conduct, and were repulsed with great slaughter. The victors pursued the fugitives to Meulan, which they stormed and levelled with the ground. It is quite impossible to reduce the exploits ascribed to Rollo into any chronological order, and we must therefore only say, that, about this time, he stormed Bayeux, slew its count Berenger, and then chose the daughter of that nobleman for his bride. His exertions to establish order and good government in the countries he had acquired were more glorious

than his warlike exploits; and it was, probably, in consequence of his legislative wisdom that his companions, who had hitherto ranked as his equals, now unanimously recognized him as their king. Many families came from the surrounding provinces to settle in his dominions, preferring the government of a heathen who was able to protect them, to the feebleness of a Christian monarch who knew not how to make his authority respected.

After the lapse of a few years, Rollo's power was so firmly established that all hopes of his expulsion were abandoned. Charles the Simple convoked a council of the nobles and prelates: they unanimously recommended him to enter into a treaty with the Normans; and an embassy was sent to Rollo, offering him large possessions on condition of his embracing Christianity. This truce was broken by some of the turbulent nobles of the Franks, and the war was renewed; but remonstrances were addressed to Charles by the nobles, prelates, and people of France, beseeching him to have mercy upon Christendom, and put an end to the devastations which were reducing the country. The king yielded to their prayers; he bestowed upon Rollo the sovereignty of Neustria, which thenceforward took the name of Normandy, and gave him the privilege of obtaining provisions from Brittany until the ravaged country could be again brought into cultivation.* There is no existing

* Most authors add, that Charles the Simple gave his daughter

record of this important donation: the sea-kings made no use of written documents; all their transactions were verbal; and it was not until the reign of the third duke that the duchy began to have archives.

It has been long disputed by the French historians whether Charles the Bald did or did not bestow Brittany upon Rollo in addition to Neustria. At this period Brittany was virtually independent, and the utmost that Charles could have given was permission to conquer the country. It is also a matter of controversy whether Charles expressly reserved his suzeraineté over the ceded province, and received homage from Rollo. The legends state, indeed, that the king required his new feudatory to kiss his foot in token of submission, but that Rollo refused to submit to the humiliating ceremony; being informed, however, that such a ceremony was indispensable, he consented to go through it by proxy, and delegated the task to one of his suite. When the Norman came to perform this act of homage, he seized the king's foot so rudely, and raised it so high, that he nearly hurled him from his seat. The courtiers were enraged; but the Normans present applauded their companion, and the king deemed it prudent to dissemble his resentment.

in marriage to Rollo, but M. Licquet has shown that this is an error; it originated in the fact, that Charles the Bald actually married one of his daughters to the Northern adventurer Godfrey.—Licquet, 95.

Legends, scarcely less absurd, are related of the baptism of Rollo: it is certain, however, that he bestowed very liberal donations on the churches, monasteries, and convents; but it was not the least singular trait of his new piety that some of the lands he thus bestowed were beyond the frontiers of his own dominions, and actually belonged to other feudatories. The duke measured out estates in Normandy to his old companions-in-arms: the contemporary historians mention, as a remarkable fact, that the measurements for this partition were made by a cord, and not by the rood or rod, as was usual with the Franks and Saxons. Many of the fiefs thus distributed retain the names of the Scandinavian chiefs on whom they were bestowed, at the present day.* Contemporary writers bestow great praise on the laws and institutions of Rollo, which were so superior to those of the rest of France that great numbers migrated into Normandy from the surrounding provinces. The system of police which he established is said to have been so strict, that the duke suspended bracelets of gold from trees on the public roads, which remained untouched by thieves or robbers.†

Two subsequent expeditions of the North-men against France require to be briefly related. Rollo

* Angoville, Borneville, Granville, &c. were the possessions of Amgot, Biœrn, and Gram.

† This legend is told of the reign of Frode, in Denmark; of Alfred, in England; and of Malachi, in Ireland.

resigned his sovereignty to his son William Longsword, who supported Louis d'Outremer against his turbulent vassals: the duke, who was of a weak and feeble disposition, was treacherously murdered by the count of Flanders, leaving an infant son as his heir. Louis d'Outremer took advantage of the crisis to attempt the recovery of Normandy; and would, in all probability, have succeeded, but for the valour and ability of Bernard the Dane, guardian of the young duke. He applied for aid to the Scandinavians; and an expedition, commanded by Harold, surnamed "Blaatand," or "the Black-toothed," soon arrived in Cherburg. Harold was one of the most warlike princes of his age, and he willingly granted aid to all princes who sought his succour. He had given shelter in Denmark to the sons of the Norwegian prince Eric, whom their brother-in-law Hagen had expelled from their inheritance: he had aided them to recover their inheritance; and had then, in his turn, given shelter to Hagen when driven into exile. Finally, he had waged war against the princes he had restored, had hanged one of them as a punishment for his ingratitude, and compelled the other to purchase peace by the sacrifice of a large portion of his dominions. Such was the formidable ally who came to the assistance of the Normans at a moment when their ruin appeared certain.

Encouraged by such auxiliaries, the Normans marched against the Franks; the two armies soon

came in sight of each other, and Louis proposed an interview. When the chiefs on both sides met, the Normans, irritated at the sight of the count of Flanders, the assassin of the late duke William, began to utter menaces and reproaches; these were resented by the Franks, and a scene of confusion arose which led to an irregular and unexpected battle. The French were completely routed, and Louis himself taken prisoner. He was liberated on recognizing the virtual independence of Normandy, and the victorious Harold then returned to Denmark.

The last band of Scandinavians which appeared in hostile guise on the coast of France was commanded by Olaf Tryggveson and his brother-in-law Swend. Olaf had exercised piracies on all the Northern coasts; he had ravaged Russia, Esthonia, England, and Ireland. He had been several times baptized to obtain the bribes offered for conversion; and, when he found that the coasts of Normandy were too well guarded to afford him a chance of plunder, he consented to a treaty and received baptism once more from the profligate count d'Evreux, who had been consecrated an archbishop without being obliged to resign his civil authority. After having quitted France, Olaf sailed for Ireland, married a princess of that country, and returned home. He was chosen chief of the Christian party which was at this time formed in the North, and obtained several great victo-

ries: being at length attacked by a vastly superior force, and on the point of being overpowered, he leaped into the sea with all his armour and perished in the waves.

The Normans, who had so long been the greatest scourge of Christianity, soon surpassed all other nations in devotion to the Church and its ministers. A curious anecdote, recorded of duke Richard II., deserves to be noticed as an illustration of the manners of the age. It was the duke's custom, while at Fécamp, to rise early in the morning, unknown to his household, for the purpose of attending the matins of the monks. One day he rose too early, and consequently found the gate of the chapel closed. He thundered rudely at the door until he woke the sacristan, who was by no means pleased at being disturbed from his comfortable sleep. On opening the door he did not recognize the duke, who was disguised in a peasant's cloak: he seized him by the hair, gave him a severe beating, and shut the door in his face without saying one word. Richard endured the outrage with singular patience, neither resisting nor complaining. On the following day the duke stated the matter to the chapter, and ordered the culprit to be brought before him. After he had amused himself for some time with the terrors of the poor monk, he not only granted him a pardon, but procured him an appointment in the monastery of Argence, which was one of the most wealthy in Normandy. "He is

a good monk," said Richard, "and faithful to his vows, for in spite of his anger he never broke the silence imposed upon him."

From the time that regular monarchies were established in Denmark and Norway, piracies gradually subsided, and the barbarous desire for blood and plunder yielded to the civilizing influence of Christianity. An adventurer, named Palnatoke, is said to have resisted this change, and to have instituted what we may venture to call an order of maritime knighthood at Jombsburg. None were admitted as members who had not distinguished themselves by some great naval exploit, and every one who was admitted took the obligations of a brother-in-arms to the entire confraternity. This institution lasted for some time, but it gradually sunk into decay; those who were discontented with an established government migrated to Iceland, which was rapidly peopled, and the love of liberty reconciled the exiles to the horrors of its climate and barren soil. The Skalds followed the sea-kings to their new island home, and there perpetuated the ancient Scandinavian songs and literature of their fathers; whilst the Normans in Southern Europe rapidly abandoned all reminiscences of their origin, to imitate the romances of the nations they had conquered, to practise Latin compositions, or to repeat the miraculous legends which the monks imposed upon the world as "Lives of the Saints."

A century after the colonization of Iceland,

their adventurous spirit led the descendants of the ancient sea-kings to a continent of which the existence had not been previously suspected; Greenland was discovered by the Icelanders, and was soon peopled by crowds of emigrants from Norway. Unfortunately, no traces have been preserved of the discoveries made by these daring adventurers in the North-western ocean, but there can be little doubt that many of them anticipated the discoveries of Columbus.

CHAPTER VIII.

Establishment of the Normans in Italy.—Attack on the Eastern Empire.—State of Normandy during the minority of William the Conqueror.

DESIROUS of novelty, impatient of repose, always ready to explore an untried route if it promised obstacles, dangers, and glory, the Normans undertook, with more ardour than any other Europeans, the perilous pilgrimage to Jerusalem. They united to the superstitious spirit of their contemporaries the adventurous daring of their Scandinavian ancestors; and, when they grasped the pilgrim's staff, did not abandon the warrior's sword. A species of religious knight-errantry gradually arose; the Norman pilgrims were invited to lend their aid to check the ravages of the Saracens, by the princes through whose states they passed, and few of them returned home without having exhibited proofs of their military prowess as well as their religious zeal. A counterpoise was thus found for the fanaticism which had been one of the chief elements of the Mohammedan success; the Moslem Ghazí was matched against the Christian crusader,

though that name was as yet unknown to the chivalrous pilgrim. It has been disputed whether knight-errantry was derived from the Saracens or the Normans; but in truth it belonged equally to both races, because the same adventurous and barbarous spirit which dictated the robbery of one prompted the piracy of both, and because religion afforded both a pretext for cruelty and rapacity. The knight-errant was, in fact, little better than a consecrated plunderer, who had taken out a kind of letters of marque and reprisal against the enemies of Christendom.

About the year 1016 forty Norman pilgrims, returning from Palestine, halted at Salerno. During their stay a Saracenic armament entered the harbour, and, having disembarked, threatened the city with pillage unless they should be appeased by a large ransom. Gaimar, prince of Salerno, consented to this capitulation: the money was collected, and would have been paid over to the Saracens, had not the strangers protested against such scandalous cowardice and volunteered their services. Gaimar supplied them with arms and horses: they sallied forth, attacked the Saracens, who were quite unprepared for such a result, and gained a splendid victory. Gaimar offered large rewards to his deliverers, and pressed them to settle in Salerno, but they declared that their vows required them to return home; they, however, advised him to send agents to Normandy, and enlist a batta-

lion of their countrymen, who would protect his state from the ravages of the Mohammedan pirates.*

The ambassadors of Gaimar found little difficulty in raising a gallant band of adventurers, which was placed under the command of Osmond Drengot, a Norman of high rank, who had been sentenced to banishment for murdering the knight, William Respostel, in the very presence of duke Richard.† When the Normans reached Mount Gargano, they met Melo, a leading man of Bari, who had long been engaged in organizing an insurrection against the Byzantines, the masters of that part of Italy. He made such proposals to the Normans that they resolved to aid his enterprize, and they obtained three great victories over the Greek catapans. In a fourth battle, fought in the memorable field of Cannæ, the Normans were overwhelmed by superior forces, and routed with slaughter: Melo, in despair, sought shelter in Germany; but the remnant of his gallant auxiliaries maintained a guerilla warfare against the Greeks, probably favoured by the native Italians, who reluctantly submitted to the rule of the Byzantines.‡

After some time, the Normans, who had been joined by various recruits, chose for their chief

* Muratori, iv. 362.

† Respostel had falsely vaunted the favour shown him by Osmond's daughter.

‡ Muratori, v. 254.

a gallant soldier, named Randolph, and under his directions formed an entrenched camp, defended on three sides by impassable marshes, where they deposited the plunder and the tribute which they levied on the surrounding country. A service rendered to Sergio, a Neapolitan prince deposed by a rival and restored by the Normans, procured for them a better establishment. He bestowed upon Randolph the castle and county of Aversa: and the new prince immediately sent emissaries to his countrymen, describing the riches and resources of Apulia, its beautiful climate, its delicious fruits, and its fertile soil; promising that he would bestow vast wealth on all who came to join his banners.

Italy became, in consequence, the chosen field of Norman adventure. Amongst those who hastened to seek a fortune in a land whose loveliness has been its curse,* were the three sons of Tancred, knight of Hauteville, whose names were William, Drogo, and Humphrey. When they reached the

* Italia! oh Italia! thou who hast
The fatal gift of beauty, which became
A funeral dower of present woes and past,
On thy sweet brow is sorrow plough'd by shame,
And annals graved in characters of flame.
Oh God! that thou wert in thy nakedness
Less lovely or more powerful, and couldst claim
Thy right, and awe the robbers back who press
To shed thy blood, and drink the tears of thy distress.
Childe Harold, iv. 42.

peninsula, they received intelligence of a war between Pandolph, prince of Capua, and Gaimar, the duke of Salerno: without pausing to inquire into the causes of the quarrel, they at first joined the banners of Pandolph, but, soon becoming disgusted with his conduct, they allied themselves to Gaimar, who by their aid became master of the entire state of Capua.* The duke of Salerno did not know how to dispose of his dangerous auxiliaries, when, fortunately, they were invited by the Byzantines to join in the recovery of Sicily from the Arabs. Three hundred Norman chevaliers, commanded by the sons of Tancred, were transported by the Greeks into the island; and their valour produced such an impression in the first skirmish, that the city of Messina capitulated. The emír of Syracuse immediately assembled the Mohammedan forces; marched against the Greeks and Normans, who were on their side, advancing to meet him; and commenced a desperate engagement with all the fury of the early Saracen. Confusion arose in the Christian host; the emír cut his way through the ranks of the Greeks, and had almost won the battle, when William, the eldest of the sons of Tancred, put spurs to his horse, and, rushing on the Saracen, clove him to the chine by a single blow, and hurled him dead on the sand. The Arabs, astonished at this display of superhuman strength, fled in dismay,

* Muratori, v. 550.

whilst the victors bestowed upon their champ the surname of the "Iron-handed."*

The Greeks were ungrateful to their auxiliarie they seized on all the plunder which the Norman had obtained by several successive victories; and when a Lombard chief, named Hardouin, was sent to remonstrate against this injustice, the Byzantine general ordered him to be scourged out of the

* According to some Italian critics, Ariosto has taken his description of the slaughter of Agramant by Orlando from this incident. The passage, as translated by Mr. Rose, is worthy of being extracted.

> As nomade swain, who darting on its way
> In slippery line the horrid snake has seen,
> That his young son, amid the sands at play,
> Has killed, with venomed tooth, inflamed with spleen,
> Grasps his batoon the poisonous worm to slay;
> His sword, than every other sword more keen,
> So in his fury grasped Anglantes' knight,
> And wreaked on Agramant his first despite.
>
> 'Scaped, bleeding, with helm loosened from his head,
> With half a shield and swordless, through his mail
> Sore wounded in more places than is said,—
> As from the dull or envious falcon's nail
> Escapes the unhappy sparrow-hawk, half-dead,
> With ruffled plumage and with loss of tail,—
> On him Orlando came, and smote him just
> Where with the helmed head confined the bust.
>
> Loosed was the helm, the neck without its band:
> So like a rush was severed by the sword,
> Down fell, and shook its last upon the strand
> The heavy trunk of Libya's mighty lord.
>
> Orlan. Furios. xlii. 7—9.

camp! Speedy revenge would have been taken by the Normans; but Hardouin advised them to disguise their resentment, return to the peninsula, and seize the provinces which were subject to the emperors of Constantinople. The Normans adopted his advice: they took possession of the transports before the Greeks could suspect their design; and, having routed a detachment sent to interrupt them, crossed the strait and hastened to join their brethren in Aversa. Here they recited their wrongs, pointed out the cowardice and injustice of the Greeks, dwelt upon the opportunity afforded by the absence of the Byzantine army in Sicily, and induced their countrymen to undertake the entire conquest of Apulia.* Twelve chiefs were chosen, with the title of counts, who agreed to share their conquest equally; and these, with forces that did not amount to two thousand in all, proclaimed war against the emperor of the East. Several great battles were fought, in all of which the Normans were victorious. Once, indeed, they were in danger of defeat; their great champion, William of the Iron-hand, lay in his tent so broken down by quartan fever that he could not bear the weight of his armour; but, hearing that his men were on the point of giving way, he hastily seized his weapons, and, rushing half-naked into the midst of the press, hewed out with his sword the road to victory. For his prowess he was deservedly

* Cedren, Hist. Comp. ii. 755.

chosen chief count of the Normans, and Melfi was selected as the capital of their united dominions.*

The Italian princes complained to the pope that the ravages of the Normans were more cruel and extensive than those of the pagans; and the pontiff endeavoured to engage Henry II., emperor of Germany, to undertake their expulsion. But Henry was easily induced to accept the rich presents offered him by the twelve counts, and to grant them a regular investiture in their dominions. Thus disappointed, the Italians combined with the Greeks to assassinate all the Normans in a single day; and multitudes fell victims to the plot. Humphrey, the last remaining of the sons of Tancred, assembled the survivors, and exacted such severe vengeance for the massacre of his countrymen, that the whole peninsula was filled with mourning.

Pope Leo IX. resolved to make one great effort for the deliverance of Italy: he assembled an army consisting principally of German levies, and advanced into Apulia. The Normans, who had been recently joined by a fresh band of adventurers under the command of Robert Guiscard, also a son of Tancred, did not decline the combat, but marched to meet the papal host in full assurance of victory. Robert, according to the chronicles, was the great hero of the battle that en-

* Malaterra, p. 552.

sued: he was to be seen in the thickest of the press, fighting with both hands, and bringing down an adversary at every blow; he was three times dismounted, but on every fall he reappeared more terrible than before, as if, like Antæus, he had derived a new infusion of vigour from contact with the earth. *

The pope fled from the field to a neighbouring town, where he was soon blockaded by the conquerors. Terrified by the preparations made for a siege, the inhabitants yielded up the pontiff to the discretion of his enemies; but the Normans were too religious to injure the Head of the Church, and they even threw themselves at his feet to ask pardon for the victory which they had recently gained. Leo was overjoyed at this unexpected reception; he bestowed his benediction on the warriors he had come to exterminate, and granted them investiture in the name of St. Peter, not only of the territories they already possessed, but of all that they might hereafter conquer in Calabria and Sicily. It is from this curious transaction that we are to date the pretensions of the popes to the lordship of the kingdom of Naples.

Calabria was conquered by Robert Guiscard, aided by his younger brother, Roger de Hauteville; and soon after, on the death of Humphrey, Robert caused himself to be proclaimed duke of Apulia, Calabria, and Sicily, without paying any

* Malaterra, ubi suprà.

regard to the rights of Humphrey's children. Sicily, of which Robert had proclaimed himself king by anticipation, had returned under the dominion of the Saracens after the expulsion of the Greeks. The impetuous Roger demanded permission to undertake its subjugation, and crossed the straits, so dreaded by ancient mariners, in a frail skiff with a few chosen followers. The citizens of Messina, indignant at seeing their country invaded by a mere handful of men, hastened to expel the invaders. Roger, affecting flight, drew them to a distance in the plain, and then by a sudden attack threw them into irretrievable confusion. They were pursued to the very gates of the city, and the Normans then returned to their ship laden with plunder.

A formidable fleet was now prepared, and an army levied, to undertake the conquest of Sicily in regular form. The Saracens, who were still powerful by sea, appeared with a large force to dispute the passage of the strait, and Guiscard hesitated to encounter their superior navy. Roger, with difficulty, obtained permission from his brother to lead out a small squadron. In a dark night he escaped the vigilance of the Saracen cruisers, and made himself master of Messina, which had been denuded of its garrison. Having first implored the divine assistance to secure his conquest, Roger gave orders for the massacre of all the male citizens, and abandoned the unhappy city to the mercy of his licentious soldiery. This

strange union of piety and pillage, devotion and butchery, meets us everywhere in the history of the Norman wars, and formed, in fact, the very essence of their chivalry.

A contemporary historian relates an anecdote of the sack of Messina, which would be worthy of a place in the best annals of Roman heroism. A young Saracen had a beautiful sister whom he dearly loved. He fled with her from the fury of the Normans; but the unhappy virgin, timid, unaccustomed to fatigue, and half-dead with terror, began to relax her speed at the very moment when the rapid approach of the enemy required fresh rapidity of flight. Her brother conjured her by their mutual love to make fresh exertions; but all the energies bestowed upon her by nature were exhausted, and she fell fainting into his arms. The Normans, now sure of their prey, rushed towards them. The young Saracen for a moment gazed tenderly on the features of his sister, so long the object of his pride and affection; then, raising his dagger, he exclaimed, "I will mourn you dead, but not dishonoured," and stabbed her to the heart.*

Robert Guiscard soon arrived to take part in his brother's conquest; they gained several victories with their united forces, and, having garrisoned the cities they had won, returned to Calabria at the approach of winter. Roger, during this

* Malaterra, p. 562.

interval of repose, was united in marriage to Judith, a daughter of the ducal house of Normandy, to whom he had been contracted before he came to Italy. After his marriage, he demanded from Robert the execution of the treaty which he had made, assigning to him half Calabria. Robert refused, and the two brothers were soon engaged in civil war. Roger surprised the town of Geracio, the inhabitants of which were attached to his cause: Guiscard immediately repaired to the place in disguise, and planned with one of the chief citizens, named Basil, the means for the recovery of the place. Before anything could be effected, Robert Guiscard was recognized, the cry of treason was raised, Basil was torn to pieces by the infuriate populace, and his wife was put to death by the horrible torture of impalement. Robert himself was thrown into prison, and his recent subjects menaced him with a public execution.

Intelligence of these events being brought to Roger, he hastened to Geracio and summoned the citizens together. Having thanked them in a long and eloquent speech for their fidelity and valuable services, he added, "I am the person whom my brother has provoked, and to me vengeance belongs. Deliver him to me without delay. If you show the slightest hesitation, I will cut down your vines, root up your olive-trees, and storm your city!" Terrified by these me-

naces, the inhabitants at once yielded up their prisoner: Robert was brought forth; but no sooner did the two brothers see each other than they rushed together, and embraced in a passion of fraternal affection which melted both into tears. Touched by the generosity and skill displayed in effecting his deliverance, Robert gave to his brother the stipulated portion of Calabria, and conferred upon him the title of count.

Sicily had in the mean time been neglected: the Greeks, disgusted by the haughtiness of the Normans, secretly favoured the Saracens, and Roger was summoned to preserve to believe that they were under the special protection of Heaven, and he took active means to encourage this delusion. At the battle of Cerami, the light-horse of the Saracens severely harassed the squadrons of the heavy-armed Normans: suddenly, a knight in white armour, bearing a lance with white pennon displayed, appeared in the Christian ranks; he dashed forward into the midst of the hostile lines; a cry was raised that St. George had come to place himself at the head of the Norman chivalry; Roger gave out as his battle-cry, "The right-hand of the Lord hath the pre-eminence! the right-hand of the Lord bringeth mighty things to pass!"* His knights charged the Saracens home; while they, disheartened by the apparition which had so encouraged the Christians, gave way on every side, and were

* Psalm cxviii. 6.

by the gallant garrison; they harassed the besiegers by repeated sallies, and sometimes intercepted convoys designed for their camp. On one of these occasions Roger's horse was killed under him; he fell heavily to the ground, and was immediately surrounded and seized by the enemy. Shaking himself loose by a desperate effort, he again made himself master of his sword, and dealt such heavy blows around, that the Saracens recoiled in dismay. But the count was not satisfied with simply escaping: he resolved that the Saracens should retain nothing belonging to him as a tro-

saddle from his horse, brought

cations, he entrusted the government to the countess, and crossed over into Apulia for the purpose of obtaining reinforcements. Judith possessed the spirit of an ancient sea-queen: during her husband's absence she repulsed several assaults of the Saracens, and retaliated by predatory incursions into their dominions; while, at the same time, she conciliated the Greeks by checking the insolence of the licentious soldiery.

Early in the ensuing spring Roger returned with a fresh host of adventurers, and immediately took the field. He routed the Saracens in several engagements: his soldiers were

cut down almost without resistance.* Four camels, laden with the spoils taken at Cerami, were sent to pope Alexander: he, in return, bestowed upon Roger his solemn benediction and a consecrated standard.

Shortly after this victory a new body of recruits arrived in Sicily, commanded by Robert Guiscard himself; and the two brothers laid siege to Palermo.

* Malaterra, ubi sup.—The Spaniards frequently boasted of similar assistance in their wars with the Moors. Mrs. Hemans has introduced one of these scenes of celestial chivalry into her Songs of the Cid with great effect:

Then a terror fell on the king Bucar,
And the Libyan kings who had join'd his war;
And their hearts grew heavy and died away,
And their hands could not wield an assagay,
For the dreadful things they saw.

For it seem'd, where Minaya his onset made,
There were seventy thousand knights array'd,
All white as the snow on Nevada's steep,
And they came like the foam of a roaring deep;
'Twas a sight of fear and awe.

And the crested form of a warrior tall,
With a sword of fire, went before them all;
With a sword of fire and a banner pale,
And a blood-red cross on his shadowy mail,
He rode in the battle's van.

There was fear in the path of his dim white horse,
There was death in the giant-warrior's course!
Where his banner stream'd with its ghastly light,
Where his sword blazed out there was hurrying flight,
For it seem'd not the sword of man.

Here the Normans had to encounter a very strange enemy: a multitude of those venomous spiders called tarantulas appeared in their camp; and, though the effects ascribed to their bites by the historians were exceedingly ridiculous, they were not the less dangerous.* The garrison, which was both brave and numerous, also made a vigorous defence, so that, after three months of vain labour, the Normans were obliged to raise the siege. The presence of Robert was also imperatively required in Calabria; for the city of Bari had revolted, and placed itself under the protection of the emperor of Constantinople. The duke immediately laid siege to the place;† but it was vigorously defended, and he was obliged to apply to Roger for assistance. The Saracens, having heard that the Christian army in Sicily was divided, a part having marched towards the coast to embark for Calabria, sallied from Palermo and attacked Roger on his road. They were routed and cut to pieces: among the spoils Roger found some of those carrier-pigeons used as expresses by the Arabs; he tied papers, containing an account of his victory, round their necks, and then set them free, to convey to Palermo intelligence of the fate of its defenders.

Robert made vast preparations for carrying on

* Omnesque quos punxerit tarenta multâ veneficâ ventositate replet: in tantumque augustiatur, ut ipsam ventositatem, quæ per anum inhonestè crepitando emergit, nullo modo restinguere prævaleant.—MALATERRA, p. 570.

† A. D. 1067.

the siege of Bari: a fleet was anchored round the peninsula on which the city stands, and huge iron chains, extending from ship to ship, rendered all maritime communication impossible; squadrons of cavalry were posted on the isthmus leading to the gates, so as to intercept every kind of provision; while every species of engine then used in the attack of fortified places was brought to assail the walls. The defenders of Bari hired an assassin to destroy Robert; but he failed to find an opportunity, and returned to the city. Their only hope, then, rested on the Byzantine fleet, which had been sent to their relief under the command of a fugitive Norman named Gosselin. Roger, with his Sicilian squadron, encountered this fleet, destroyed some of the Greek ships, captured others, and made Gosselin a prisoner. Bari immediately opened its gates to Robert; and Roger returned to Sicily, whither he was soon followed by his brother, eager to pursue his career of conquest.

The Normans knew that they could not become masters of Sicily so long as the Arabs remained in possession of Palermo, the capital of the island. They renewed their investment of the city, a fleet blockaded the port, Robert attacked the walls from the west, and Roger pressed it hard from the south. The besieged made a desperate defence; they repaired by night the breaches which had been made during the day, mines were met by countermines, and the missiles of the Normans were collected

to be hurled back upon themselves. In order to show their bravery and security, the Saracens threw the gates of the city open, and tauntingly invited the Normans to enter if they pleased. One bold knight accepted the challenge; he couched his lance, slew the sentinel at the gate, galloped full speed through the streets of the city, and escaped in safety from the gate at the opposite side. Finally, the garrison were compelled to capitulate: the Saracens simply stipulated for religious freedom, which was conceded to them; and it deserves to be recorded, that, though this was an age of fanaticism and persecution, the promise made to the Saracens of Palermo was faithfully kept by the conquerors.*

Having appointed his brother Roger count of Sicily, Robert Guiscard returned to Italy, being solicited by the citizens of Amalfi to deliver them from the tyranny of their duke Gisulph. As Robert was married to the sister of this prince, he was reluctant to engage in war without having previously tried the efficacy of negociations; Gisulph, however, rejected his interference with contempt: the Normans immediately entered his territory, and, being joined by the citizens of Amalfi, deprived him of his estates and drove him into exile. Abelard and Herman, the sons of duke Humphrey, having by this time grown to man's estate, began to demand the inheritance of their father: it was not

* Fazello, p. 398.

until after a long series of uninteresting hostilities that Robert could be persuaded to do them justice. He was, however, finally induced to present them with a large sum of money; but, as they had reason to dread his treachery, they refused his invitation to settle in Palermo, and removed to Constantinople.*

Events of little consequence occupied several succeeding years of Robert's life; but circumstances revived his ambition, seeming to afford him a chance of obtaining the Eastern empire. He had given his daughter Helena in marriage to prince Constantine, the son of the emperor Michael; but, in a revolution at Constantinople, Michael was dethroned by Nicephorus Botoniates, who deprived young Constantine of the power of giving heirs to the empire. Guiscard prepared to revenge the wrongs of his son-in-law: he engaged an impostor to present himself in Apulia as the dethroned emperor Michael, and set the example of receiving him with all the honours due to a sovereign. In his name war was proclaimed against the usurper; but, before an expedition could be got ready, Alexis Comnenus had succeeded to Nicephorus, and Robert had to encounter an adversary whose reputation for craft, if not for courage, was equal to his own.

A fleet of one hundred and fifty vessels was prepared: Robert, accompanied by his son Bohemond, and by his second wife Sychelgarta, embarked with

* Malaterra, p. 577.

thirty thousand men, and steered for the coast of Epirus. After some predatory attacks on minor places, he resolved to lay siege to Durazzo, the ancient Dyrrachium, but known in the early Peloponnesian wars by the name of Epidamnus. It was a place of considerable strength; and the fortifications, originally erected by the Romans, had been recently repaired. Robert resolved to attack the city both by land and sea; his army was disembarked, and placed under the command of the gallant Bohemond, a name destined to become celebrated in the history of the crusades. While the soldiers advanced towards the city, Robert led the fleet along the coast of Epirus, in the vicinity of the Acro-Ceraunian chain of mountains, the perils of which have been rendered immortal by the classic poets.* A frightful tempest arose as the ships were rounding the head-land which leads into Durazzo. "Rain fell in torrents; the winds rushing from the mountains upheaved the sea from its depths, and the waves broke upon the iron-bound coast with thundering crash. The oars were broken in the hands of the rowers, the sails were blown away from the yards, ships with their whole crews were overwhelmed."† Robert's own ship was driven

* Horace, Odes, i. 3.

† Anna Comnena, Alexias, lib. iii.—This princess, whose narrative we shall follow in the account of the Epirote war, does ample justice to the character of Robert Guiscard, though he was the enemy of her father Alexis. It is a pity that Sir Walter Scott, who never read the Alexiad, should have turned it into

on shore: despair seized the soldiers; they murmured against their chief, and accused him of imprudence and impiety; they declared that his besieging apparatus was the principal cause of the calamity. He had prepared huge wooden towers covered over with hides, and erected these on the decks of the vessels for the purpose of attempting to storm the sea-walls of Durazzo; but the leather, saturated by the rain, gave way, the timbers of the towers fell down into the ships with destructive force, and no vessel in which one of them had been erected escaped from ruin. The transports which conveyed provisions suffered the same fate as those which were laden with engines of war; and, when the wind abated, Robert found the shattered remnant of his forces destitute alike of food and of weapons. "Under such circumstances," says Anna Comnena, "the bravest might have been induced to abandon his designs; but Robert was a man of gigantic confidence, who would have persevered even under a thunder-stroke, and I verily believe that at the worst crisis of danger his only prayer was to be spared until he could meet his enemies and en-

ridicule in his Count Robert of Paris. Anna Comnena has no pretensions to rank as a Greek classic writer, but she is the best of the Byzantine historians; and many of her descriptions, as for instance that of this storm, may challenge comparison with any parallels that Scott himself could furnish. To prevent the necessity of repeated reference, we may state that we have followed the authority of the princess exclusively in the account of the Epirote campaign.

gage in the purposed battle, that is, until he could execute the very designs for which he was now punished by Heaven."

Luckily for the survivors of the wreck, it was the season of harvest. The country afforded them an abundant and precious supply of food, which was prudently collected and husbanded. Robert assembled the remnant of his forces in Glabuntza, where he was joined after some time by fresh troops from Italy, and in less than a week the Normans appeared to have forgotten the great calamity from which they had escaped.* Durazzo was invested both by land and sea, whilst the citizens were filled with terror at the rapidity with which the Normans had repaired their losses and constructed new engines of war.

George Palæologus, the Greek governor of Durazzo, was a warrior of great resolution and experience. He made every preparation for a vigorous resistance, and at the same time wrote to the emperor, describing the timidity of the garrison and the boldness of the besiegers. The Norman duke thought this a favourable opportunity to bring the false Michael on the stage; but there were many in Dyrrachium well acquainted with the person of the real emperor, and the impostor was rejected with scorn. No further use was made of the deception; Robert from henceforth openly avowed

* Anna Comnena says that she heard all these particulars from a Latin gentleman who had been with Robert the entire time.

that he intended to conquer the Byzantine empire for himself.

Alexis was well aware that neglect, or delay, would be ruinous in a contest with such an enemy as Robert. He entered into alliance with the Seljukian sultan, and obtained from him a large body of Turks skilled in the use of the terrible Greek fire, with which, as yet, the Normans were unacquainted. He also concluded a treaty with the republic of Venice, which had about this time established its maritime supremacy in the Adriatic; and he took into his pay all the adventurers and exiles whom the various revolutions of Western Europe had driven from their homes. Thus prepared, he hastened to march to the relief of the besieged city.

The Venetian fleet soon appeared off the coast of Epirus; and Robert, on learning their arrival, sent his son Bohemond to invite them to espouse his cause. An indecisive answer was returned; the negotiations were adjourned to the following day. During the night the Venetians formed their vessels in line, anchored, took down their sails, and raised their small boats up to the cross-trees, where they were firmly secured by ropes and spars. They then placed some of the strongest sailors in these boats, and supplied them with blocks of wood sharpened at both ends and studded with iron points, to hurl into the Norman ships if they should attempt to come to close quarters.

In all the sea-fights which took place about this time, we find that the Greeks and Italians were superior to the Normans in the working and management of their vessels, but that the latter were irresistible when they could grapple with and board their enemies. Acting on this principle, Bohemond bore down on the Venetians the following morning, uncertain whether they were prepared to join him or to resist, and came alongside the admiral's galley. The Venetians attacked him immediately: a block hurled from the suspended boat fell with such force as to break through the bottom of Bohemond's ship, and she immediately filled with water. Most of the crew were drowned, and the prince himself escaped with the greatest difficulty. In consequence of this disaster the Normans returned to their harbour, where they were closely blockaded by the Venetians, now the undisputed masters of the sea.

Famine and disease assailed Robert's army, but failed to break down the spirit of the obstinate Norman. To increase his perplexity, the waters of the river Glukûs, in which he had posted his fleet, suddenly failed; and he found himself unable to get his vessels to sea at the moment when he wanted them to coöperate with a squadron daily expected from Italy. To remedy this disaster, he constructed a lofty dam across the upper part of the river, and directed every little stream from the neighbouring hills into this reservoir.

When sufficient water had been thus collected, he broke down the dam, and the sudden flood floated all his vessels into the open sea. The Venetians had previously retired, and once more Durazzo was menaced both by sea and land.

Alexis saw that it was no longer prudent to refrain from encountering his formidable enemy: he marched against him with a force of seventy thousand men, including a body of Anglo-Saxons who had fled from England to escape the cruel tyranny of William the Conqueror and his Norman nobles. On the other side, several of the adventurers who had accompanied William to England, after the war was over, came as volunteers to join Robert Guiscard; so that those who had met as foes at the battle of Hastings were about to renew their combat on the plains of Epirus.*

Having received intelligence of the emperor's approach, Robert assembled his forces, and harangued them on the necessity of implicit obedience to a single chief, requesting them to elect whomsoever they believed most worthy to lead them in the ensuing battle. As might have been anticipated, they with one acclaim declared that he alone was worthy to be their general. At his command the soldiers proceeded to burn their baggage and scuttle their ships, so as to leave themselves no alternative but death or victory.† It was a sin-

* Order. Vital. 508—641.

† Anna Comnena, p. 116.

gular coincidence, 'that Alexis occupied the lines which Pompey held in the skirmishes that preceded the battle of Pharsalia, and that Robert's position nearly coincided with that of Cæsar.

Alexis reposed his principal confidence in the Anglo-Saxons;* nor were they unworthy of his trust: their charge broke through the battalions of the Lombards and Calabrians, driving them to the very edge of the sea. Sychelgarta, Robert's wife, threw herself into the midst of the fugitives: her reproaches, her exhortations, her example revived their courage; they rallied, and again formed their lines. The assailants, in the ardour of pursuit, had separated themselves from the rest of the imperial troops; Robert occupied the gap that had been thus left with his choicest soldiers, and, attacking the Anglo-Saxons in flank, slew multitudes of them and put the rest to flight. The fugitives fled to the neighbouring church of St. Michael, and, occupying its parapets, windows, and roofs, prepared to make a vigorous resistance; but Robert fired the building, and they all perished in the flames. The main body of the imperialists had not yet engaged; but the rout of the Anglo-Saxons, and the shrieks of those who were burned in the church, so disheartened them, that, when Robert charged them with his cavalry, they broke their lines and made no attempt at resistance.

* Anna Comnena calls them "the Barangians."

But for a concurrence of 'unforeseen circumstances, the battle of Durazzo might have given a Norman emperor to Constantinople; as that of Hastings, a little before, had given a Norman sovereign to England. But, immediately after his victory, Robert received pressing solicitations for aid from the pope (Gregory VII.), who was closely besieged by Henry IV., emperor of Germany. The success of the Germans would have been too perilous to the Norman duchies of Italy for Robert to delay: leaving his son Bohemond to command the army in Epirus, he hastened to Italy, assembled a new army, obtained the aid of his brother Roger, who had just completed the conquest of Sicily, punished severely some cities which had withdrawn from their allegiance, and then marched direct upon Rome. The emperor Henry did not wait to encounter this formidable antagonist: Robert forced his way into Rome; delivered the pope, who was besieged in the castle of St. Angelo; cruelly wasted the city with fire and sword, under the pretence of a popular insurrection; took Gregory VII. under his special protection, and removed him to Salerno, where this great pontiff died in the following year.*

During Robert's absence, his son Bohemond had continued the war against Alexis with great skill and vigour. The emperor, unable to meet the Normans in the open field, had recourse to the

* A.D. 1084.

usual arts of a Greek of the Lower Empire—treachery and intrigue. He gained over several of the counts in Bohemond's army, and they refused to serve any longer unless they immediately received the arrears of their pay, which had been accumulating during the last four years. Bohemond was thus compelled to put an end to the campaign: he placed the greater part of his forces in garrison, and then went to consult his father on this new crisis in his fortunes. He had scarcely quitted Epirus, when several of the discontented counts went openly over to the army of Alexis.

Robert was still undaunted; he made the most active exertions to renew the war with fresh vigour, and made strict inquisition into the conduct of those who were suspected of having yielded to the seduction of Grecian gold.* Alexis applied for aid to the Venetians; they readily obeyed his summons, and sent out a fleet which gained two victories over the Normans. Success rendered the Venetians careless; they sent home their lighter galleys, and then stationed their heavy vessels in the harbour of Coryphus, without sending out a single cruiser to watch the motions of the enemy. Robert took advantage of this negligence; he suddenly attacked them in the harbour: the Venetian vessels, which had been light-

* Anna Comnena asserts that one of Robert's own sons had been bribed to betray his father and brothers to the emperor.

ened by the consumption of the provisions that served them for ballast, were in several cases overset by the soldiers and sailors rushing confusedly to the side on which the enemies were approaching. It was a slaughter rather than a battle; the Venetians and Illyrians fell without resistance.

The cruelty with which Robert treated his prisoners so exasperated the Venetians, that they immediately fitted out another fleet, and inflicted a severe defeat on the Normans. Robert collected the remnant of his armament and sailed for Cephalonia, which had been previously invaded by one of his sons. Here he was seized with a violent fever, and earnestly solicited a draught of cold water. The legend, which gives an account of his death, is thus related by Anna Comnena: "The disease attacked him near the barren and arid promontory of Ather. While his soldiers were running up and down in search of some well or fountain, one of the natives said to them in the hearing of Robert, "See! yonder is the island of Ithaca: there was formerly in it a very splendid city named Jerusalem, which has long fallen to decay; but in it there remains a fountain of the best and purest water which can be obtained. When the king heard these words, he knew that his end drew nigh, for it had been long since foretold that his conquests would extend to the promontory of Ather, and that he should die in the vici-

nity of Jerusalem."* He survived five days longer, and breathed his last in the arms of his wife who happened to arrive in the island a little before his death.†

Robert, like all victorious warriors, was the life and soul of his army; indeed it might be said

* English history attaches a similar legend to the death of Henry IV., which has been immortalized by Shakspeare.

K. Henry.—Doth any name particular belong
Unto the lodging where I first did swoon?
Warwick. — 'Tis call'd Jerusalem, my noble lord.
K. Henry.—Laud be to Heaven!—even there my life must end.
It hath been prophesied to me many years,
I should not die but in Jerusalem;
Which vainly I supposed the Holy Land:—
But, bear me to that chamber; there I'll lie;
In that Jerusalem shall Harry die.
King Henry IV., Part ii. Act iv. Scene iv.

"The same equivocal prediction," says Steevens, "occurs also in the *Orygynale Cronykil of Andrew of Wyntown*, b. iv. ch. xii. v. xlvii.—Pope Sylvester, having sold himself to the Devil for the sake of worldly advancement, was desirous of knowing how long he should live and enjoy it:

The Dewil answeryd hym agayne
That in all ese, withouten payne,
He suld lyve in prosperitè
Jerusalem quhill he suld se.

Our pope soon after was conducted by his duties into a church he had never visited before:

Then speryd he, quhat thai oysyd to call
That kirk. Than thai answeryd all,
Jerusalem in Vy Laterane, &c.

And thus the prophecy was completed by his death.

† Anna Comnena, p. 162.

that the army died with him: a contemporary poet declared,

> Their hope and courage dwelt in him;
> With him their pride and valour were o'erthrown.
> Whilst Robert lived, confiding in his charms,
> The Normans would have faced a world in arms;
> But, when he fell, despairing they return'd,
> And fled from cowards long beat down and scorn'd.*

Anna Comnena relates that the Norman fleet suffered severely from a tempest on its return, and that the vessel which carried the duke's remains narrowly escaped shipwreck. The body was embalmed at Otranto, and conveyed for interment to Venusia. Such was the strange career of Robert Guiscard: he came to Italy a simple Norman knight, with no possessions but his sword and pilgrim's staff; but, in a few years, he was absolute master of Apulia and the two Calabrias, a sharer in the conquest of Sicily, the terror of two emperors who fled before him, the restorer of the pontiff who first established the political supremacy of the holy see, the conqueror not only of men, but of tempests, mountains, waves, and seasons. He died in the country of Ulysses, and was buried in that of Horace.

His descendants did not inherit his dominions: after some changes of little importance, his son Bohemond carved out for himself a principality in Palestine, while a son of Roger took possession of all the conquests gained by his uncle and father.

* Guil. Appul. p. 277.

The title of duke, however, did not sufficiently harmonize with the extent of his states; he caused himself to be crowned king at Palermo,* and thus became the founder of a monarchy which has lasted to our own days. Seventeen years after his coronation † he declared war against the empire of the East; ravaged Corinth, Thebes, and Athens; brought with him to Sicily all the breeders of silk-worms and manufacturers of silk he found in that country; exerted himself diligently to naturalize that branch of industry in his kingdom, where it attained a high degree of perfection before it spread farther into Western Europe.‡ His son William I., whom he had associated in power during his lifetime, inherited his dominions, but not his noble qualities. Under him the empire declined. William II. promised fair to revive the glory of his race; but he died without issue, and with him the legitimate line of Tancred of Hauteville became extinct. The Sicilians elected Tancred, the natural son of Roger, to be their sovereign; but Henry VI., emperor of Germany, claimed the throne in right of his wife Constance, Roger's legitimate daughter, and succeeded in establishing the Suabian dynasty in the two Sicilies.§ In another chapter we shall have to relate the iniquitous deposition of the Suabian monarchs by the popes, the transfer of their dominions to Charles of Anjou,‖ brother of

* In the month of May, A. D. 1129.
† A. D. 1146.
‡ Muratori, vi. 668.
§ A. D. 1194.
‖ A. D. 1268.

St. Louis, the savage cruelty of the French, and the fearful revenge exacted by the Sicilians.

Robert, the great duke of Normandy, who has often been confounded with that imaginary hero of old romance, Robert the Devil, died in the Holy Land, leaving his estates to his natural son William, then a mere child. The future conqueror of England was entrusted to the guardianship of the French king Henry, at whose court he heard the news of his father's decease. But the old proverb, "Woe be to the country whose ruler is a child!" may be said to be a compendium of the history of William's minority. The turbulent nobles of Normandy took advantage of the weakness of the government to assert their independence, and to give free scope to their feuds and personal resentments. Duels, murders, and assassinations were multiplied; the bonds by which society is held together seemed to be rent in sunder. Osbern, William's tutor and favourite councillor, was murdered by Roger Montgomeri in the very chamber where William lay asleep. He was in his turn surprised by the friends of the deceased in his bed, and slain without any form of trial. Roger de Toëni, the standard-bearer of Normandy, who had acquired some celebrity by his exploits against the Saracens in Spain, openly refused allegiance to his sovereign, declaring that he would never submit to be ruled by a bastard. Humphrey de Vaux sent his son Roger de Beaumont against the revolter, and Toëni

was slain. At a later period Roger de Beaumont accompanied William in the conquest of England, and was rewarded for his services with the earldom of Warwick.

In order to illustrate the manners of this chivalrous age, as it has been frequently designated, we may cast a glance at the history of the Talvas family. William de Belesme, count of Alençon, surnamed Talvas, for some unknown reason had revolted against duke Robert; but, being closely besieged in his castle, he was forced to surrender at discretion. The duke would not grant him pardon until he presented himself before the army, with naked head and feet, a saddle on his back and a bridle in his mouth, as a beast for the duke to ride. This degradation broke his heart; he bequeathed the task of revenge to his knightly sons, and their deeds of ruffian violence filled all Normandy with confusion. The eldest was torn in pieces by the people; the second fell by the stroke of a lance in an insignificant skirmish; and the fourth was murdered in prison by some barons, whose sense of outrageous wrong was too keen to allow of their waiting for the slow process of legal redress. William Talvas, the youngest, the most turbulent and the most cruel of the family, still survived: the death of his brothers had put him into possession of large estates, which allowed him to gratify his evil propensities with impunity. His wife Hildeburga disapproved of his conduct; the

warmth of her remonstrances displeased him, and he caused her to be strangled while kneeling at prayers in the chapel of the castle. He sought another wife, and invited to the nuptials William of Giroy, a noble knight, who was said to have been an unsuccessful candidate for the lady's hand. Giroy, though warned of the peril of treachery, accepted the invitation: he was received at the castle of Alençon with every appearance of courtesy and friendship; Talvas even invited the young knight to remain and keep company with the bride, while he went to enjoy the pleasures of the chase. Scarcely, however, had Talvas quitted the castle, when his servants, according to his orders, seized on the unhappy Giroy, thrust out his eyes, cut off his ears and his nose, and then drove him out of the castle to find his way home the best way he could. Many similar anecdotes of this count's ferocity are related in the contemporary chronicles. But he was at length punished by the revolt of his son Arnold,—a son every way worthy of such a father. He raised the vassals of Talvas, expelled the count from his domains, refused to make the smallest allowance for his support, and left him to die in poverty and exile. Arnold himself, after a brief career of iniquity, was murdered in his bed.*

These atrocities were not confined to Normandy; similar deeds of violence were perpetrated throughout France. The clergy made honourable exer-

* Licquet, ii. 108.

tions to check the spreading evil; a bishop announced that a letter had been dropped from heaven, addressed to him, which commanded him to forbid private warfare, murder, and pillage. Gross as was this pious fraud, it was generally credited in an age of superstition; several provincial synods were convoked, and the PEACE OF GOD was proclaimed with the general approbation of the clergy and the people. It was enacted, that every individual, of whatever rank or station, should travel unarmed; that usurpation of property should be severely punished; and that whoever violated the holy peace should be deprived of the rights of sanctuary. Ecclesiastics and monastics of both sexes offered the escort of their sacred character to all travellers who desired such protection; and, save in Normandy, no interruption was offered to the clerical convoys.

Excommunication was denounced against those who violated the new rule of peace, and this dreaded sentence was pronounced with all the forms which were likely to influence the imagination. The officiating minister stood on a scaffold erected in front of the altar, having lighted tapers placed by his side and a crucifix in his hand. When he had finished the Gospel for the day, he pronounced the following formulary in a loud impressive voice:

"We excommunicate all the knights of this bishopric who refuse to observe the laws of peace

and justice, in obedience to the orders of their diocesan. Cursed be they, and their accomplices! Cursed be their arms and weapons! Cursed be their horses and their attendants! May their portion be with the fratricide Cain, the traitor Judas, the rebels Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who went down quick into the flames of eternal torment. As I quench these tapers in your presence, so may their hopes of felicity be extinguished in the sight of saints and angels if before their death they do not repent and make satisfaction at the discretion of their bishops!" When he concluded, all the ecclesiastics who stood around quenched the lighted tapers which they held in their hands; while the terrified people joined in the chorus, "May God thus extinguish the light of those who refuse to observe peace and justice!"*

The Norman chevaliers very frankly told the bishops that they would give no heed to their remonstrances and their curses: they continued their battles, their murders, and their pillage for four years longer without respite or intermission. At length the province was visited by a pestilence,† which the Normans were led to regard as the just punishment of their disobedience: influenced by such a feeling, they intimated their readiness to adopt an amended life. On the other hand, the clergy, fearing that it would be useless to aim at perfection, resolved to make some con-

* Labbæi et Cassarti Concilia, ix. 381. † A. D. 1042.

cessions to the stern spirit of the age. A council was assembled at Caen, and regulations were made for establishing, not the Peace, but the TRUCE OF GOD. This truce commenced on Wednesday evening at sunset, and ended on the following Monday at sunrise: during the four days and five nights comprehended in this interval all acts of violence were prohibited, under the penalty of excommunication, thirty years' exile, and exclusion from the rites of the Church while living, and from Christian burial when dead. But a tacit sanction was given to burning, to murder, and to pillage in the three days and two nights between the morning of Monday and the evening of Wednesday. The truce also extended over what were deemed sacred seasons; that is to say, from Advent Sunday to the Octave of the Epiphany, from the first day of Lent to the Octave of Easter, and from the Rogations to the Octave of Whitsunday. It is not the least singular part of the proceedings of this council, that duke William, then in his sixteenth year, was excepted by name from the obligations of the truce, and at the same time secured in all its advantages.

When William had reached his twentieth year, the Norman nobles, becoming acquainted with the firmness and vigour of his character, began to fear that he would restrain their power; and a conspiracy was formed against him, at the head of which was his cousin, Guy, count of Vernon. Se-

veral of the most powerful barons joined in this confederacy, and William was obliged to apply for assistance to the king of France. The bishop of Rouen, who was charged with this embassy, exerted himself so successfully that Henry was induced to take the field in person. He was joined by William: they marched against the insurgent nobles, and encountered them at the Val des Dunes, within eight or nine miles of Caen. In the battle that ensued the king of France was hurled from his saddle by a follower of the count of Contentin, and trampled for some minutes under the feet of the horses. He was but slightly injured; and, being remounted, fought bravely during the remainder of the day. The lines in which Wace commemorated this incident are still familiar to the peasantry around Caen:

> This is the spot where the Cotentine's lance
> Bore prostrate to earth the proud monarch of France.*

In this battle William gave the most distinguished proofs of valour, and the victory was principally obtained by his personal prowess. Wace records an incident of the fight too characteristic of the manners of the age to be omitted. Just before the battle joined, king Henry asked duke William to which side a superb squadron of cavalry belonged, which was so posted as to leave it doubt-

* De Costentin icssè la lance
Ki abati le rei de France.
ROBERT WACE, ii. 36.

ful for which party it would declare. "That," said the duke, "is the banner of Ralph Tesson, and I am sure that I have never given him any cause of offence." In fact, Tesson, one of the most powerful barons, had been engaged in the conspiracy, and had made a vow at Bayeux that William would be one of the first whom he would strike in the battle. When he came to the field, however, his vassals reminded him that the duke was his liege lord, to whom he owed homage and obedience, and that resistance to him might be followed by a forfeiture of his fiefs. This observation decided Tesson's course: he galloped towards the duke, drew off his gauntlet when he came near, and with it lightly struck William on the shoulder: "I have sworn," said he, "to strike you this day; my vow has been fulfilled, and from me you have no further injury to dread." — "Thanks, good Ralph!" replied the duke; "but remember to do your duty this day, I beseech you." Tesson waited until the battle was joined, perhaps with the resolution of declaring for the victorious party. He, however, took an active part in the defeat of the insurgents, and vigorously pursued them when driven from the field.*

This battle ruined the plans of the insurgents. Many perished in battle, others fell by the hands of the executioner; and the castles and fortresses of those who purchased safety by submission were

* Wace, ii. 30—32.

razed to the ground. Guy sustained a siege, or rather a blockade, of three years in his castle of Brionne, but was eventually compelled to capitulate; and history records nothing of his future destiny. In return for the assistance of Henry, William joined the king in the war he waged against Geoffrey Martel, the powerful count of Anjou. Some jealousy arose between the allies; which was not surprising, as the sovereign felt that the army of his vassal was superior in number, equipment, and discipline to his own. The king, through fear of the duke, made peace with the count; and Geoffrey invaded Normandy, to punish William for his unprovoked hostility. In the course of this desultory war William exhibited many traits of the savage ferocity by which he was subsequently distinguished in England. When he advanced to recover Alençon, which had been surprised by the Angevins, some soldiers, who garrisoned a redoubt in front of the place, bitterly reproached William with the illegitimacy of his birth. "By the splendour of God!" he cried, "they shall atone dearly for these words before the sun sets." He immediately led his soldiers to the attack, carried the redoubt by storm, and took the thirty-two men who had insulted him prisoners. They were led in sight of the ramparts of Alençon, their hands and feet were cut off, and the mangled limbs thrown before the walls of the town; and in this helpless condition

* Labbæi et Cassarti, ix. 104.

they were left exposed to the terrified garrison. Alençon surrendered at discretion; and William, in his turn, invaded the territories of Anjou. After his return from this successful expedition he celebrated his nuptials with Matilda, the daughter of the count of Flanders; though the pope had solemnly prohibited the marriage, and threatened all the parties concerned with the penalties of excommunication.

Leo IX. was greatly enraged by this act of disobedience; he laid the duchy of Normandy under an interdict, to which William paid not the slightest attention. The pope soon consented to compromise the matter: it was agreed that the duke and duchess should erect two monasteries and four hospitals, after which they received absolution.* But the court of Rome did not pardon the repulse so easily. Henry was secretly instigated to re-unite Normandy to France, and thus show that the line of Capet would retrieve the errors of the dethroned Carlovingians. It is not necessary to dwell on the brief war that followed: Henry was defeated by the duke, and purchased peace by promising William the investiture of all the districts he could conquer from the count of Anjou. This led to another brief war, in which the Normans were again victorious; but all parties became weary of

* In reference to this, or some similar incident, a punning writer has remarked, that all the papal bulls of this age tended to *edification*.

these hostilities, and peace was concluded on better conditions than the Angevins had a right to expect.

In the interval of peace that followed, William successfully exerted himself to put an end to the feudal tyranny of his nobles, under which Normandy so long had suffered; but, in its stead, he substituted his own despotic authority, which was scarcely less intolerable. He scrupled not to employ the most infamous means to accomplish his purposes; the drugs of poisoners, the daggers of assassins, were joined to brute force in decimating the Norman nobility. He recruited his armies from the profligate adventurers who wandered through Europe in search of military employment; and he had thus at his disposal a body of soldiery unrivalled in daring bravery, but at the same time the most profligate, licentious, and rapacious collection of banditti that ever existed in Europe. The peace with France was displeasing to these military robbers; and the duke himself would probably have suffered from their resentment, had not a strange combination of circumstances opened to them a new field of adventure, where they reaped the last rich harvest which fell to the lot of Norman warriors, where they won nobility for themselves and a kingdom for their master. It was for the purpose of restraining his licentious dependents that William introduced the curfew, which was first established at Caen in Normandy: in that land it

was universally popular, for it was instituted to preserve the natives from military violence; but it was now about to be established in another country, for the purpose of placing an entire population helplessly at the mercy of its savage conquerors.

CHAPTER IX.

Norman Conquest of England.—Reign of Canute the Dane; restoration of the Saxon line under Edward the Confessor; accession of Harold.—The battle of Hastings and its consequences.

DURING the reign of the feeble Ethelred, the ravages of the Danes were frequent in England; and in order, either to open a means for securely negociating with their chiefs, or securing an ally who would join in repelling their attacks, the Anglo-Saxon monarch sought, and obtained, the hand of Emma, sister of Richard II. duke of Normandy. Ethelred treated his consort with great indignity; he lived in open adultery with the vilest courtesans, and allowed them to insult the queen with impunity. Emma complained to her brother, and the duke sent a deputation to remonstrate with the king. This gave such offence to the English monarch, that he sent an armament to ravage Normandy with fire and sword, and to bring the presumptuous duke bound to his presence. The English effected a landing; but Nigel, the count of the Cotentin, with only the forces belonging to his own district, defeated the invaders with great loss, and compelled them to retire to their vessels. A contemporary historian avers

that the leader of this unfortunate expedition gave the following account of his ill-success to his sovereign: "Most serene monarch, we have not encountered duke Richard, but we have fought for our misfortune with the ferocious population of a single county. There we met not only men of valour, but warlike women,* who threw themselves into the thickest of the combat, and cleft the skulls of their stoutest adversaries with no better weapons than the yokes from which they suspend their water-buckets."†

It was in this same year‡ that the atrocious massacre of all the Danes throughout England was perpetrated. Neither age nor sex was spared, and the women were frequently put to death by the most barbarous torments. Some were ripped open, others were burned alive, and others were compelled to look on while their infants were mercilessly stoned to death. Amongst the victims was the sister of Sweyn, king of Denmark: she had been baptized by the name of Gunhilda, and had been married to an English nobleman; her brother consenting to the union as a guarantee for his sincerity in the treaty which put an end

* Ammianus Marcellinus mentions similar instances of female prowess. "Several warriors together," he says, "are not a match for a Gaul and his wife: her hands and feet are fearful weapons, and a blow of her fist is not less severe than the stroke of a stone from a sling."—Am. Mar. xv. 11.

† Willelm. Gemmet. 251. ‡ A. D. 1002.

to his invasion. Her husband and son were slaughtered before the eyes of this unfortunate lady, and she was herself put to death with every circumstance of studied cruelty and insult.

Sweyn soon appeared, to avenge an outrage which had excited general indignation throughout Northern and Western Europe. During seven years England was devastated by the Northern invaders; and Ethelred finally purchased a dishonourable peace by surrendering sixteen counties to the Danes, and ransoming the rest of his dominions by the payment of eighty thousand pounds sterling. The English, disgusted by the cowardice of their sovereign, invited the Danes to take possession of the rest of the country. Ethelred dreaded the invaders, and, suspecting his own subjects, sent Emma and her two sons into Normandy; whither he soon followed them, leaving the defence of his kingdom to Edmund, his natural son.

Richard received Ethelred with great kindness, and promised to aid him in recovering his crown, which, on the death of Sweyn, had been placed by the Danes on the head of Canute, his eldest son. The Saxon nobles, on the other hand, invited Ethelred to return, and offered to restore him to all his former power if he would promise to govern them better than heretofore. Ethelred was accompanied on his return by St. Olaf, king of Norway, who commanded a body of continental auxiliaries, and by his two legitimate sons, who were

escorted by some of Richard's chosen chivalry. Thus aided, Ethelred speedily recovered a considerable portion of his kingdom; while Canute, mortified at the sudden change, vented his rage in mutilating the Saxon hostages who had been given to his father. This act of wanton and savage cruelty embittered the war, which was already carried on with great ferocity. In the midst of the contest Ethelred died rather suddenly: "his heart," says an old writer, "was broken by witnessing the distractions of the kingdom."

The rules of succession were never strictly observed by the Anglo-Saxons: on Ethelred's death, they chose his natural son Edmund, surnamed Ironside, for their sovereign, passing over the legitimate heirs in the court of Normandy. No one appears to have protested against the proceeding. Edmund's bravery rendered him the only person fit to rule in the desperate circumstances of the Anglo-Saxons; and it is probable that the foreign education of Emma's children may have created a prejudice against them. The new king compelled the Danes to raise the siege of London, and defeated them in five general engagements.

The old historian of Norway relates an incident connected with one of those battles, which, though very romantic in its character, is most probably founded on fact. The Danes having been defeated in a great battle, fought, it would appear, somewhere south of the Thames, Ulf, one of their lead-

ers, fled into a wood, where he lost his way. After wandering about all the night, he met at daybreak a young peasant driving a herd of oxen. Ulf saluted him and asked his name. "I am called," said the young man, "Godwin, the son of Ulfnot; and you, if I am not mistaken, belong to the Danish army." The Dane confessed that he belonged to the detested race: he entreated the young peasant to have compassion on him, and to point him out the nearest road to the Severn, or any other river in which he could find Danish shipping. "Foul befal the Dane who seeks aid from a Saxon!" was Godwin's reply. Ulf, however, continued to urge him with rich promises, and proffered a large bribe if he would abandon the herd and guide him to the sea-coast. "The road is not long," answered the lad; "but it would be dangerous to travel it at present. The peasants, animated by yesterday's victory, are scouring the country in every direction; if they should meet us, there would be no chance of escape either for you or your guide." Ulf drew a gold ring from his finger and tendered it to the youth; but Godwin returned it, saying, "I cannot take your gold, but nevertheless I will guide you to a place of safety."

Godwin then led the Dane to his father's farmstead, where he lay concealed during the day. Old Ulfnot was probably a Saxon ceorl, or free farmer; indeed, it is not impossible that he may have been one of the inferior thanes, for in those days the

sons of persons of rank not unfrequently engaged in what would now be regarded as menial occupations. Ulfnot carefully protected the Dane during the day: when night approached, he led Godwin to his guest, and said, "Know, sir stranger, that this is my eldest son, whom I now entrust to your good faith! After having served you as guide, there will be no longer any safety for him amongst his countrymen; present him, then, to your king, that he may obtain protection and employment." Ulf readily gave the required promise, and his performance went beyond his pledge. He adopted young Godwin as his son, obtained for him the rank of a noble in the court of Canute, and opened to him a career of ambition which finally placed the young herdsman at the head of the English aristocracy.*

Edmund and Canute soon learned to respect and fear each other; a truce, and subsequently a peace, was concluded between them, and by mutual consent the Thames was fixed upon as the common boundary of their dominions: but, on Edmund's death, Canute broke the treaty, and after some slight resistance became sovereign of all England. He used his power despotically and cruelly: those nobles whom he suspected of attachment to their ancient freedom and native royalty, were either banished or put to death; Edwy, the brother of Ironside, who was so popular among the Saxons of the middle

* Torfæi, Hist. Norweg. ii. 37.

and lower classes that he was called "the king of the churls," was outlawed and murdered; finally, the children of Edmund Ironside were sent to the king of Sweden with a request that he would prevent them from disturbing the Danish reign. The Swedish monarch pretended not to understand the hint; he allowed the youths to remove into Germany, from whence they subsequently removed into Hungary, and obtained high rank in the service of the king of that country. "Whoever will bring me the head of one of my enemies," said Canute with all the ferocity of the old sea-kings, "shall be as dear to me as if he were my brother."

Canute sought an alliance with the duke of Normandy, and offered his hand to Emma, the widowed queen of Ethelred. His offers were accepted, and the lady a second time became queen of England. She has been severely censured for this marriage by all the Saxon chronicles, and by the great bulk of the modern historians; we, however, can see nothing improper in her conduct: she had no reason to respect the memory of Ethelred, who had treated her with contumely and neglect; her children were safe in the court of their uncle, and she might have had reasonable hopes of obtaining for them some compensation for the loss of their inheritance, from the justice or the generosity of Canute. Thierry says, that after the birth of Hardy-canute, her only son by the second marriage, she neglected her children in Normandy; but we can find

no evidence for this charge in the chronicles. On the contrary, there is proof that she corresponded with them regularly, and sent them sums of money at different periods.

The ferocity of Canute's character was greatly abated after his marriage. He made no distinction between the Danes and Saxons in his administration: during his reign the two races were in a great degree amalgamated, and the favour of the conquered race was conciliated by the respect which the king evinced for the national saints of the Saxon church. He founded and richly endowed several churches and monasteries, expressly declaring that these were intended as an atonement for the depredations committed by his ancestors;* and he sent large sums of money to Rome for the maintenance of the English pilgrims and students in that city. Towards the close of his reign he went on a pilgrimage to Rome himself, and sent home a very curious account of his reception to the prelates and nobles of England. An anonymous writer states, that, before setting out on this pilgrimage, Canute laid a plot for the destruction of Godwin, whose civil and military talents filled him with alarm. He sent the earl to Denmark, with a letter commanding the local governor to put the bearer to death as soon as he reached the shore. Godwin, who suspected that all was not right, opened the letters during the voyage,

* See his charters in the Monk of Croyland's chronicle.

destroyed the warrant for his execution, and put in its place a forged order, enjoining the governor to receive the English earl with all the honours due to a favoured representative of royalty, and to give him the king's sister, who resided in Denmark, as his wife. The marriage was celebrated before any intelligence of the fraud could reach England; and Canute, on learning the event, hastened to obtain the friendship of the earl, whom he loaded with dignities.*

Canute† at his death bequeathed his kingdom to Hardycanute, his son by the Norman princess; but this prince happened to be at the time in Denmark,

* Vita Haroldi apud Chroniques Anglo-Normandes, ii. 153.

† Canute was a generous patron of bards and minstrels: indeed, he was a poet himself; and a ballad of his, composed when he visited the isle of Ely on some great festival, was long popular with the English peasantry. The following stanza has been preserved in the Book of Ely:

Merie sungen the muneches binnen Ely
The Cnut ching reu therby:
"Roweth, knightes, noer the lant,
And here we thes muneches sang."

Or in modern English,

Sweetly sung the monks in Ely
When Canute the king rowed by:
"Row, knights, near the land,
And hear we these monks' song."

GUEST'S History of English Rhythms.

Canute's reproof to his courtiers is sufficiently known, and is very creditable to his piety and his good-sense.

and the army in England raised Harold, the illegitimate son of the late monarch, to the throne.* Earl Godwin and the queen-dowager refused to acquiesce in this arrangement; they proclaimed Hardycanute king, and were supported by all the people in the southern counties of England. London declared for Harold, so that Emma was forced to hold her court in Winchester. A desultory civil war ensued, in which the country was desolated by the ravages of both parties. But Hardycanute showed no anxiety for his English subjects; he preferred the Scandinavian habits of intemperance, and the hard drinking for which the Danes were celebrated for many centuries.† Emma during her brief regency repulsed an invasion of the Normans, headed by her eldest son Edward, who came over to restore the ancient Anglo-Saxon line in his own person: but her fidelity to her youngest son Hardycanute was frustrated by his continued absence; both she and

* Other authorities state that Canute wished to make his two illegitimate sons kings, as well as Hardycanute; and that he bequeathed England to Harold, Norway to Sweyn, and Denmark alone to his lawful heir. The character of Alfgiva, the mother of Harold and Sweyn, was not the brightest, and it was generally believed that Canute's claim to the paternity of these children was more than doubtful.

† Howell mentions the beastly drunkenness practised at the court of Christian IV.; and Harrington relates, that, when this monarch visited England in the reign of James I., he introduced this custom of swinish revelry, so that not only the lords but the ladies of the court frequently were seen in a state of beastly intoxication. See also the play of Hamlet, Act i. Scene iii.

Godwin were forced to make their peace with Harold, who thus became master of all England. Ethelnoth, archbishop of Canterbury, who was of Saxon descent, refused to perform the ceremony of the coronation for the usurper; but Harold, like Napoleon in modern times, cut short all dispute by placing the crown on his own head. To show his contempt for the archbishop and clergy, he absented himself from all places of worship, and made it a point to take out his hounds at the moment that the faithful assembled for prayer.*

Soon after the reconciliation between Emma and Harold, an event occurred, which is so differently described in the chronicles, that, though there can be no doubt of the main facts, it is scarcely possible to determine the motives of the parties concerned, or even the precise line of action which each of the actors pursued. Emma wrote to her sons in Normandy, requesting that one of them would come over to her privately, and concert measures for restoring the Saxon line. Some assert that this letter was forged; others aver that Emma was induced by Harold to ensnare her sons, whose competition he dreaded: but the historian whose testimony we deem entitled to most weight† declares that the queen did write such a letter, at the instigation, or at least with the privity, of earl Godwin; and that the Anglo-Saxons were at the

* Hoveden and Saxon Chronicle.

† Henry of Huntingdon.

time prepared for a general insurrection. Alfred, the younger of the two brothers, accepted the invitation. He raised a considerable force in Normandy, and, after a fruitless attempt at Sandwich, effected a landing near Herne Bay. As he advanced towards the interior, he was met by earl Godwin with a considerable body of Saxons, who swore fidelity to the prince, and promised to conduct him to his mother. It is probable that the Normans exhibited some of their national insolence on the march, for the historian declares that Godwin repented of having sent the invitation, and told his followers that the new invaders would be more rapacious than the Danes themselves. As London was faithful to Harold, the Normans were conducted to Guilford, and supplied with abundance of meat and wine; but in the night they were betrayed by Godwin to the forces of Harold, and all bound with fetters and gyves. Five hundred of the invaders were tortured and butchered by their brutal captors; Alfred's eyes were torn out, and he died a few days after in exquisite anguish.

Harold did not long survive this horrid tragedy: on his death, Hardycanute ascended the throne, and one of his earliest acts was to order that the murder of Alfred should be judicially investigated. At the same time he commanded that Harold's body should be disinterred and thrown into the sea: it was, however, fished up by some of his old adherents, and secretly buried in St. Clement's Danes outside Temple Bar. This bu-

rial-ground had been expressly consecrated for the Danes, as if they could not be reconciled to the Saxons even in death. Godwin's trial proved to be a mere mockery: he appeared in court with a great train of friends and dependents, who all swore that they did not believe him to have had any share in the murder of the son of Ethelred. To conciliate the king, who probably was not satisfied with this evidence, Godwin presented him with a ship covered with gilt plates, having a figure-head of solid gold, manned by eighty warriors with gilt armour and weapons, each wearing a golden bracelet of the weight of six ounces.*

Hardycanute's life was prematurely brought to an end by a fit of apoplexy, the result of intemperance. When the news spread abroad, the Saxons flew to arms, resolving that they would no longer submit to the domination of a foreign prince: Godwin and his son Harold placed themselves at the head of the insurgents; the Danes, after a brief resistance, fled in their ships or submitted. A grand council of the states of the realm was held at Gillingham, and it was resolved that Edward, the son of Ethelred, should be recalled from his long exile in Normandy and placed upon the throne of his ancestors. Two conditions were annexed to this restoration, both equally displeasing to Edward; that he should not bring many of his Norman companions to England, and that he should marry the daughter of Earl Godwin.

* William of Malmesbury.

He swore to observe both conditions, but secretly resolved to evade their performance.

Edgitha, who was forced upon Edward as his queen, was a lady of exquisite beauty and great acquirements: her husband, however, declared that she never became completely his wife;* and his connubial chastity furnished his principal claim to the title of Saint and Confessor bestowed upon him by a bigoted and servile clergy. So lovely and amiable was she, that it was proverbially said, "Edgitha sprung from Godwin as the rose from a thorn."† Ingulphus of Croyland informs us, that when he was a boy at Westminster school, and used to visit his father, who lived in the court of Edward the Confessor, he was often examined both in the Latin language and in logic by the beautiful and virtuous queen Edgitha, who excelled in both these branches of literature. Emma, the queen-mother, was treated with great harshness by her son; he seized her treasures and confiscated her estates under the pretence of her not having shown him kindness during his adversity. The only person of the Saxon race to whom Edward showed anything like a desire of rendering justice, was his nephew, prince Edward, the son of Edmund Ironside: he sent an embassy

* "Nuptam rex hac arte tractabat, ut nec thoro amoveret, nec virili more cognosceret."—WILLIAM OF MALMESBURY.

† "Sicut spina rosam, genuit Godwinus Eghitam." A Latin verse preserved by Ingulphus of Croyland.

to invite him to return from Hungary to England, and, after forty years of exile, that prince returned to his native land. He died about a month after his arrival; leaving an infant son, named Edgar Atheling, and two daughters, one of whom Margaret, was afterwards queen of Scotland, and Christina, who became a nun.

At this period the court of Rome had commenced its long series of usurpations over the independence of national churches, and had found the Normans more pliable in submitting to the arrogant claims of the Vatican than any of the other European nations, and at the same time more unscrupulous in establishing their own dominion by force. A tacit alliance was formed between the military usurpations of the Northern semi-pagan pirates, and the ecclesiastical usurpations of the Roman pontiffs: the popes flattered the buccaneering dukes and counts with benedictions and consecrated banners, receiving in return the more substantial reward of a large share of the plunder obtained by invasion and conquest. Edward the Confessor was largely imbued with the superstitions of his age: he was at one time with difficulty prevented from entering a monastery; and, no doubt, a good monk was spoiled when he was made a king. Several Norman ecclesiastics were invited by him to England: the Saxons, however displeased by the presence of these intruders, could not murmur at persons who were invested with the sanctity

of religion, and were even silent when they saw them raised to the highest ecclesiastical dignities. By the influence of his clerical advisers, Edward was induced to enter into a plot for securing the inheritance of the English crown to William duke of Normandy, in spite of the hereditary claims of Edgar Atheling, and the rights of the Saxon nation to choose their own sovereign.

Edward's reputation for sanctity, which was everywhere proclaimed by the clergy, prevented the Saxons, a race easily duped by the appearance of religion in their sovereigns, from taking any active measures to frustrate his designs. Some allowance, indeed, should be made for the circumstances of his position: he had been educated in a foreign land, at a court where the Saxon language was unknown, and the Saxon usages proscribed as gross and vulgar. His monkish preceptors had taught *him* that implicit submission to his ecclesiastical advisers was the sum and substance of Christian virtue; and the bonds, which were thus imposed upon his mind in childhood, were riveted by the constant vigilance of the ecclesiastics who frequented his court. Edward's jealousy and hatred of Earl Godwin were not unnatural; he was the chief agent in the atrocious murder of prince Alfred, his influence rivalled that of royalty, and his purpose of securing the succession for his own family was perfectly notorious. A still further source of bitterness was the con-

tempt which Godwin and his sons openly avowed for the king's foreign favourites: they did not hesitate to speak of the Normans as mere robbers and plunderers; they derided their pretended chivalry, which was in truth but a mere disguise for rapine; and they declared their resolution to protect their countrymen from their extortions.

Eustace, count of Boulogne, had married the sister of Edward, the widow of another French count: he came to England on a visit to the king, was magnificently entertained, and, when he proposed to return, orders were issued that he and his suite should be allowed free quarters in every city on their road. After having passed through Canterbury, the count proceeded towards Dover; and, when he came near the town, he put on his armour, mounted his war-horse, invited his followers to come and select lodgings for themselves, and to enter the town in full panoply. The men of Kent, in that age, were distinguished by their stubbornness of temper and high spirit of independence; they were therefore not disposed to submit to the arrogance of the French knights, and, when one of them attempted to enter the house of a respectable citizen, he was repulsed at the threshold. Irritated at this, the knight drew his sword and wounded the Englishman; but the servants of the house hasted to the relief of their master, and the Frenchman was driven away. He hastened to communicate his mishap to Eustace: the count

immediately assembled his knights, marched to the house, and murdered the owner at his own fireside. Not content with this atrocity, Eustace and his followers galloped through the streets of Dover, cutting at all they met, and trampling women and children under the feet of their horses. The townsmen flew to arms; a sharp struggle ensued; nineteen of the Frenchmen were killed, and the rest driven outside the walls. Eustace, instead of embarking immediately, turned round and proceeded to Gloucester, where Edward at that time held his court, for the purpose of complaining of the indignity with which he had been treated.

Edward was inflamed with violent rage when he heard of the treatment that his brother-in-law had experienced. He summoned Godwin, in whose government Dover was comprised, and ordered him immediately to march with the royal troops and inflict military execution on those who had insulted the count of Boulogne. Godwin was far from sharing his master's precipitate resentment; he insisted that the people of Dover ought not to be condemned unheard, and required that the matter should be fully investigated by the states of the realm. Enraged by this disobedience, Edward resolved to proceed against Godwin himself as a traitor: the earl received intimation of his danger, and with his two sons prepared for resistance; but the English were unwilling to take up arms against their religious king. A parliament assembled in

London, and, held in awe by a military force, passed an act of attainder against Godwin and his children, who were all driven into exile. Even the queen Edgitha shared the misfortunes of her family: she was deprived of all her property; even the furniture of her apartments was taken away, the foreign courtiers declaring, with bitter irony, that she ought not to sleep on a bed of down, while her father and brothers were beggars and exiles.*

Godwin and his sons soon returned: the whole Saxon race rose in insurrection against the foreigners; Edward was obliged to consent to their being sent out of England, and to give his royal promise that Normans should not be again employed in the government. The sincerity of the pious Confessor may be very reasonably doubted. A little before the insurrection he had received William, duke of Normandy, at his court, and had in all probability arranged with him the will by which the crown of England was bequeathed to a stranger. Among the Normans who were expelled was Robert de Jumiéges, archbishop of Canterbury: Stigand was elected his successor; but the court of Rome refused to recognize the new prelate, and the Norman clergy throughout England regarded him as an intruding usurper. Several of the foreigners for whom Edward felt a strong per-

* "Ne scilicet, omnibus suis parentibus patriam suspirantibus, sola sterteret in plumâ."—WILLIAM OF MALMESBURY.

sonal attachment were permitted to remain about the court, and through them William was enabled to maintain his influence with the king, and to keep before his view the obligation of choosing such a successor as would preserve England in the unity of the Church.

It is very doubtful whether the Confessor's reconciliation with Godwin and his family was complete: most historians assert that the king never pardoned the old earl; but that he was favourably impressed with the high qualities of Harold, whose abilities rivalled those of his father, and were unsullied by any imputation of crime. His share in the murder of Alfred was, on the other hand, an incessant theme of reproach to Earl Godwin; and, according to the legendary historians, it was indirectly the cause of his death. Whilst dining one day at the royal table, he saw the attendant who was pouring out wine stumble and nearly fall; he saved himself, however, by throwing his weight on the foot which had not slipped. Godwin, smiling at the quickness with which one leg had retrieved the slip of the other, said to the king, "See how a brother comes to assist a brother!"—"It is, indeed, true," replied Edward gravely, "that a brother has need of a brother's aid. Would to God that mine lived to help me!"—"Why, sire," said Godwin, "do you reproach me at every moment that your brother's loss recurs to your mind? May this morsel choke me if I had any share in

procuring his death!" As he spoke, he put the morsel in his mouth, and instantly fell dead on the floor.* The legend is so far true, that Godwin was seized with a fit of apoplexy at the royal table, and died a few days after; the preceding conversation and imprecation are the ordinary inventions of a superstitious age.

Siward,† the great chief of the Danes who had settled in Northumberland, died about the same time as earl Godwin, leaving only one son, Waltheof, who was too young to undertake the government of the Northern provinces. The charge was accordingly conferred upon Tostig, the brother of Harold. Though maternally descended from the Danes, the new governor of Northumberland treated the settlers there with such harshness that he provoked an insurrection, and was compelled to fly in haste from the province. Harold was sent by the king to quell the insurgent Northumbrians: before commencing hostilities, he invited the chiefs to a conference; and, being convinced that they had just reason for resisting Tostig's administration, he

* Henry of Huntingdon.

† This is the chief who led a body of English auxiliaries to assist Malcolm in recovering the throne of Scotland from the usurper Macbeth:

> "Gracious England hath
> Lent us good Siward, and ten thousand men;
> An older and a better soldier, none
> That Christendom gives out."
>
> *Macbeth*, Act iv. Scene iii.

did not hesitate to confirm their election of Morkar, son of a Danish chief named Alfgar, as their governor, and returning to court he obtained the king's sanction to this appointment. The indignant Tostig went into exile, and exerted himself to raise up enemies against his country in Flanders, France, and Normandy.

We have now to relate an incident, singularly illustrative of the superstitions of the age, and which may be said to have been at once the principal cause of the Norman invasion, and the principal source of its success. When earl Godwin was reconciled to Edward the Confessor, he gave, as hostages for his good faith, his youngest son Wilmot and his grandson Haco. Edward immediately sent them both for safer custody to his cousin, William of Normandy; and they had been now detained more than a year in captivity. Harold solicited permission from the king to visit Normandy for the purpose of obtaining the release of his relatives; but Edward, aware of William's character, long tried to dissuade him, and finally gave his consent with obvious reluctance. It appears from the Saxon Chronicles that Edward had begun to appreciate the noble qualities of Harold's character, and had pardoned his descent from Godwin; but, at the same time, he was trammelled by his previous agreement to bequeath the crown to William, and by the influence of his foreign fa-

vourites, who secretly alienated his mind from all his Saxon subjects.

Harold set forth on his journey as if he were taking an excursion for pleasure, mounted on a hunter, with his falcon on his hand and his hounds uncoupled for the chase.* He embarked at Bosham on the Sussex coast; but scarcely had he quitted the shore when a storm arose, which separated his vessel from the rest of the fleet, and drove her ashore near the mouth of the Somme, in the territories of Guy, count of Ponthieu. It was the barbarous custom of that age for petty sovereigns to take advantage of such accidents as that of Harold, and seize on the wealthy or noble persons whom chance had placed in their power for the purpose of extorting a ransom. Harold and his companions were arrested by the count's orders, and imprisoned in the fortress of Belram, now Beaurain, near Montreuil.

In order to escape from a long captivity, the Saxon wrote to William that he was the bearer to him of important intelligence from the English

* See the plates copied from the Bayeux tapestry in the sixth volume of the Vetusta Monumenta, published by the Society of Antiquaries. This tapestry is a pictorial history of the Norman conquest, said to have been worked by the Saxon ladies who were detained as hostages for the loyalty of their relatives at the court of Matilda, William's queen. It is two hundred and fourteen feet in length, and twenty inches in breadth. It is still preserved at Bayeux.

court, and he therefore solicited the duke to procure his deliverance. William immediately sent a menacing letter to the count of Ponthieu, commanding him to release his captives; but Guy disregarded his threats, and would not abandon the advantages which chance had placed in his way, until he had obtained a large sum of money and the grant of a fair estate.

Harold's reception at the court of Normandy was marked by an excess of courtesy: William declared that he was willing to release the hostages without any ransom, as a proof of his esteem for Harold; and he conferred knighthood on several of the young Saxons who had accompanied the earl. An expedition against Brittany was planned for the purpose of giving the young knights an opportunity of fleshing their maiden-spurs; horses and arms were liberally provided for Harold and his companions, who gladly seized the opportunity of manifesting their prowess. During the campaign, William and Harold slept in the same tent, and rode together in friendly conversation.* On one of these occasions William introduced the subject of the English succession: he said, "When Edward and I lived together like brothers under the same roof, he promised me that I should be his heir. I should be glad, Harold, to have your aid in obtaining

* "Tales togeder thei told, ilk on a good palfray."
BRUNNE'S *Chronicle.*

the fulfilment of that promise: be assured that, if I obtain the kingdom by your assistance, I will immediately grant you everything that you desire." *

Harold's life was at the mercy of the duke: the hostages whom he came to release, and his companions, were equally in danger, for William was known not to be scrupulous in the employment of means to further the objects of his ambition. He gave a vague promise of adhesion, but the duke insisted on more precise and specific engagements. "Since you consent to serve me," continued William, "you must bind yourself to fortify Dover castle, to dig a well of good water there, and to give it up to my soldiers when required. You must also give your sister in marriage to one of my barons, and take my daughter Adela to your wife. Finally, you shall leave one of the hostages you have come to claim, as a pledge of your fidelity; and I will restore him to you in England when I arrive there as king!" Harold had no means of evading the required promise; he gave it, however, with suspicious reluctance, and the crafty Norman devised a plan for obtaining from him a more solemn ratification of the agreement.

A grand council of the Norman prelates and

* William of Poitou.—We have followed this chronicler in this part of the narrative, for his account was derived from those who were eye-witnesses of the several transactions, and some of them active participators in the events.

barons was assembled either at Avranches or Bayeux. By the duke's orders a chest was secretly conveyed into the place of meeting, filled with the bones and relics of the saints most honoured in the surrounding country, and covered over with a cloth of gold. A missal was laid upon the cloth, and William summoned Harold in the presence of the assembly to confirm by oath the promises which he had previously made. As before, the Saxon felt that it was necessary to comply: he pronounced the required oath; and, as he concluded, the whole assembly joined in the imprecation, "So help you God at his holy doom!" * At a signal from the duke, the cloth of gold was

* The Rev. Mr. Tyler, in his treatise on Oaths, seems to doubt that Harold was entrapped into taking a more solemn pledge than he had intended. He says that it rests principally upon the authority of Robert Wace, but we think that the deception may be fairly inferred from the narratives of Henry of Huntingdon and the Monk of Croyland. It will probably be gratifying to our readers if we insert so much of the Roman de Rou as refers to this transaction, accompanied by Mr. Tyler's literal translation, the old French being in many parts obscure and difficult to interpret without the help of annotations.

Co se li plaist il jurera,
Et Willame le graanta.
Por rechoivre cest serment
Fist assembler un parlement.

And if he pleased, he would swear to this;
And William consented,
To receive this oath,
He called a parliament.

A Baieux

removed, and Harold shuddered with superstitious awe when he found that his oath had been taken on the relics of saints and martyrs. Not satisfied with this, William retained Wulnot as a hostage, but permitted Haco to accompany Harold into England.

A Baieux (ço solent dire)
Fist assembler un grant concire.
Toz li corz saintz fist demander
Et en un liu tuz asembler :
Tut une cuve en fist emplir ;
Pois d'un paele les fist covrir,
Ke Heraut ne sout, ne ne vit,
Ne ne li fust mostre, ne dit.
De suz out une filatire*
Tut li meillor k'il pout eslire
E li plus chier k'il pout trover ;
" Oil de boef " l'ai oi nomer.
Quant Heraut suz sa main tendi,
La main trembla, la char fremi.

At Bayeux (so they say)
He convened a great council.
He called for all the relics (*the holy bodies*)
And collected them into one place :
He filled a whole coffer full of them ;
He had them covered with a pall,
That Harold might neither know nor see,
Nor was it shown or told to him.
Above there was a reliquary,
The very best he could choose,
And the dearest he could find ;
I have heard it called " The Bull's Eye."
When Harold held his hand over it,
His hand trembled, his body shuddered. Poiz

* *Filatire ;* phylacterium, a phylactery.

Intelligence of Harold's oath was spread abroad, and it diffused general consternation amongst the Saxons. Nobody doubted that he would break a promise extorted under such circumstances; but the superstition of the age taught that the saints and martyrs would revenge the insult offered by such perjury to their bones, and a large body of the clergy, particularly those most closely attach-

Poiz a juré et a promi
Si come home ki eschari
Ele la fille al Duc prendra,
Et Engleterre al Duc reñdra.
De ço li fera son poeir
Sulunc sa force e son saveir,
Empres la mort Ewart, s'il vit,
Si veirement Dex li äit
E li corz sainz ki iloc sont!
Plusors dient, "Ke Des li dont!"
Quant Heraut out li sainz beisiez
Et il fut suz levez en piez,
Verz la cuve li Duc le trait
E lez rave cuve ester le fait.

Then he swore and promised,
As a man upon his oath,
He would take Ela, the duke's daughter,
And deliver England to the duke.
Of this he would do his power,
According to his might and knowledge,
After the death of Edward, should he live,
So truly may God him help,
And the holy relics which are there!
Many say, "God grant it him!"
When Harold had kissed the relics
And was risen on his feet,
The duke led him towards the chest,
And made him stay by the chest.

De

ed to the Romish see, began to circulate the most dismal prophecies and forebodings. The monkish Edward was peculiarly affected by this incident; he probably recollected his youthful promise, and repented of the rashness with which it had been given. His health, which had been always feeble, gave way under mental agitation; he spent the rest of his existence in prayers, penances, and monastic devotions, totally neglecting the affairs of state, which were allowed to fall into utter confusion. The Saxons say that he nominated Harold as his successor, the Normans aver that he never swerved from his promise to William: it is probable that he remained undecided between the two candidates to the last moment of his life, sometimes favouring the pretensions of one, and sometimes of the other, as superstition or patriotism prevailed in his bosom. His death was universally lamented, for every one foresaw the dire calamities which resulted from that event. His

De la cuve a le paesle osté
Ki tut aveit acoueté;
A Heraut a dedenz monstra
Sor kels cors sainz il a juré.
Heraut forment s'espoanta
Des relikes k'il li monstra.

From the chest he took the pall
Which had concealed all;
To Harold he then showed
On what relics he had sworn.
Harold was sadly alarmed
At the relics he showed him.

death-song is preserved in the Abingdon copy of the Saxon Chronicle; and we shall extract a portion of it, translated by Mr. Guest, as a proof of the popularity of the monarch, and also of the general belief amongst the Saxons that he had at the last repented of his promise to the foreigners, and chosen Harold to be the heir of his kingdom.

> Aye blithe-hearted was the harmless king;
> Though he long erst, of land bereft,
> In exile wandering dwelt—widely o'er earth,
> Sithen Canute o'ercame the kin of Ethelred,
> And Danes ruled the dear realm
> Of Engle-land.
>
> Eight and twenty
> Winters in number, wealth they parted.
> Sithen forth came, sumptuous in attire,
> For kingly bounties famous, pure and mild,
> Edward the noble. His country he shielded,
> His land and people; till on a sudden came
> The bitter death, and took (to our cost!)
> The noble man from earth.
>
> Angels bare
> His righteous soul into heaven's light;
> But the wise prince entrusted the realm
> To a high-minded man, to Harold self,
> The noble earl; he at every season
> Faithfully serv'd his lord
> In word and deed, nor fail'd in aught
> Of that was needful for the people's king.*

No better successor to the throne than Harold could be found. Edgar Atheling, the nearest legitimate heir, was a prince of feeble intellect, and,

* Guest's History of English Rhythms, ii. 75.

owing to his foreign education, could scarcely speak the English language. The earl of Kent, on the other hand, was already possessed of greater wealth and power than the late sovereign; his valour had been proved in many a well-fought field, and his justice, clemency, and moderation had been nobly manifested by his treatment of the Northumbrian insurgents. He was hailed king by the unanimous consent of the nobles and the people; but the papal clergy did not recognize the election, and the ceremony of his coronation was performed by archbishop Stigand, who, like the king himself, lay under the ban of the pope.* But there was little national joy displayed at the accession of Harold: the sinister forebodings to which we have already referred spread a universal gloom over the nation; and the appearance of a comet, which was visible for a month in England, produced an extraordinary impression of astonishment and terror. People ran out of their houses and stood in shivering groups to gaze at the celestial stranger, and to discuss the strange events that such a prodigy portended. A metrical prophecy, attributed to a monk of Malmesbury, who was said to possess supernatural powers, and especially an inspired knowledge of astrology, was circulated

* Some of the old historians say that Harold was crowned by the archbishop of York; others, that he placed the crown upon his own head; and others assert that the ceremony of his coronation was never performed.

through the land, and greatly contributed to extend the alarm. The supposed sanctity of the writer gave to his ravings "confirmation strong as proof of holy writ." We shall translate a part of this wild effusion as a specimen.

Omen of ill, of woe, and pain!
Thou shinest o'er the land again
Where erst thou madest mothers weep
Lost sons and sires in anguish deep.

For years I 've mark'd thy threat'ning ray
Wheeling through space its fearful way,
And shudder'd at the coming hour
When earth should feel thy direful power;

But never yet felt I such dread
As when I see thee o'er my head
Denouncing to my native land
Subjection to a foreign band.

Woe, woe to England! Angry Heav'n
The signal of dismay has giv'n
For wrack and ruin to efface
The glory of the Saxon race.*

When William received intelligence of the events in England, he was filled with grief and rage: his barons consoled him by promising their aid to recover his rights, and in the mean time advised him to send ambassadors to England to remind Harold of his promise, and to demand its fulfilment. The Norman rhymers who have written the history of the Conquest give a very graphic account of the

* Ranulph. Higden. Polychron. 283. — The comet is also mentioned in the rhyming chronicle of Geoffrey Gaimar; Chroniques Anglo-Normand. ii. 3.

reception which Harold gave to these deputies: he heard them to the end with great patience, and answered their menaces with cool contempt. It is not our purpose to write an English history, but to select from the chronicles some illustrations of the revolution which the Norman conquest effected; and, as the rhymers are the least known of the chroniclers to ordinary readers, we shall translate, as nearly as possible in their own rude style, some passages which serve to portray either individual character or the manners of the age. According to the Continuator of the Roman du Brut, Robert replied to the ambassadors in terms to the following effect:

"You may unto the Bastard tell
In England as a king I 'll dwell;—
My oath it is in vain to plead,
For force compell'd me to the deed,
When in his power he held me fast,
And all hopes of escape were past.
I cannot give the duke my sister;—
The lady 's dead, and so he miss'd her.
I do not want his daughter fair,
Neither for her nor him I care;
So let him keep the dame and dower,
For I defy and scorn his power." *

The duke of Normandy appealed to the pope, who at once decided in his favour, and commanded Harold to resign the crown. But the bold Saxon cared very little for papal arbitration; he at once declared that the succession to the crown of Eng-

* Chroniques Anglo-Normandes, ii. 68.

land was no concern of the court of Rome, and he took no steps whatever to avert the indignation which such a reply was certain to produce.

At this time, Hildebrand, afterwards pope Gregory VII., was all-powerful in the Vatican. To him, as we have already stated, the papacy was mainly indebted for the political supremacy to which it subsequently attained; for never did any man of such unconquerable boldness, energy, and perseverance direct the councils of the Church. By his influence it was determined in the conclave that the duke of Normandy should be empowered to undertake the conquest of England, in order to bring that country under obedience to the holy see, and to re-establish the impost called "Peter's pence," which the Saxons were very remiss in paying. A bull of excommunication was launched against Harold and all his adherents, which was sent to William, accompanied by a consecrated banner and a ring, which contained one of St. Peter's hairs set under a valuable diamond.

An ally not less valuable presented himself to the Norman duke; Tostig, Harold's brother, who never had forgiven the Saxon nobles for depriving him of the government of Northumberland. William did not repose much confidence in the vaunting promises of Tostig; but he gave him a few vessels, with which he sailed to the Baltic for the purpose of soliciting aid from the king of Denmark. Having been refused by that monarch, he applied for

aid to Harold, the son of Sigurd, the last of the sea-kings, whose daring spirit of adventure had made his name famous throughout Europe. Whilst the son of Sigurd was collecting a fleet, Tostig led his squadron to the Northumbrian coasts; but he met so warm a reception from the two renowned brothers, Morkar and Edwin, that he was forced to fly to the coasts of Scotland. Here he remained waiting for his Norwegian ally, supporting himself and his followers by piracy and predatory excursions.

The rhyming chronicle of Benedict of St. Maur avers that William sent more than one embassy to Harold, proposing that they should divide the realm of England between them, and that he did not finally resolve on war until the Saxon king had married the sister of earls Morkar and Edwin. It is probable that the duke anticipated the reluctance of the states of Normandy to aid him with men and money in an enterprise so doubtful, arduous, and expensive as the conquest of England. Indeed, when they were convoked, they showed a very strong determination to refuse any extraordinary grants and services. William Fitz-Osbert attempted to pledge them to large contributions against their will, but they protested with one accord against the unauthorized promise:

> Loses the court its show of form;
> Prelates declaim, and barons storm.*

* Wace, Roman de Rou, ii. 250.

The duke then adopted a different plan: he sent for each of his nobles privately, beginning with the most powerful, and begged them to contribute to his wants "of their own free grace and benevolence;" pledging himself that he would neither abuse their liberality, nor make these aids a precedent for future exactions. Those who had collectively refused contributions proved generous in individual subscriptions: some gave ships, others men-at-arms; many proffered personal service; ecclesiastics gave their money, merchants their stuffs, and even the peasants sent presents of corn. So far as public opinion could be made known in the eleventh century, that of continental Europe was decidedly in favour of the duke of Normandy. It was believed that no compulsion, however stringent, could defeat the obligations of an oath taken on the bodies of the saints: Harold's crime in their view was not perjury, which was so common as to be venial in that age; but it was sacrilege, which every bigot believed that he was under an obligation to punish. The murder of prince Alfred and his Norman companions, though perpetrated by earl Godwin, added to the unfavourable view which was formed of Harold's character; and his share in the expulsion of archbishop Robert from the see of Canterbury procured him the active hostility of nearly all the prelates in Christendom.

The papal bull of excommunication against Ha-

rold, and the gift of a consecrated banner to William, excited somewhat of the same fanatical spirit which in a few years after blazed out so fiercely in the crusades: the invasion of England was regarded as a religious war, and of course no other enterprise had such attractions for the profligate and irreligious as one which promised to combine abundance of plunder with atonement for sin; all the banditti of Southern Europe hasted to form the present army and future nobility of the Norman leader, and William refused the services of none, however great his crimes or notorious his reputation. He was lavish in his promise of rewards, for we find that he agreed to give one Remi of Fescamp a bishopric in England for a single ship and twenty men-at-arms.* This stipulation was subsequently fulfilled, and Remi proved to be so good a bishop that he was canonized after his death under the name of St. Remigius.

Two episodes in the history of the conquest must for a moment engage our attention. Conan, count of Brittany, hearing that William was about to assume the English crown, sent him word that he expected him to resign the duchy of Normandy, which he asserted that duke Robert had bequeathed to his father, count Alan. The message, as recorded by Benedict de Sainte More, was as follows:

* Orderic. Vitalis, 494.

"We 've heard that you 're for England bound,
Where you are certain to be crown'd;
As spies report that each day draws
Hosts of supporters to your cause:
We therefore charge you to resign
Your duchy to the Breton line.
Duke Robert, whom as sire you claim,
Though little he deserves the name,
Ere to Jerusalem he went,
Bequeathed by his last testament
His duchy to count Alan, who
Was nearest heir. You know this true.
But you and your associates base
Of Robert's will destroy'd all trace;
With poison'd cup the count removed,*
That father I so dearly loved;
And hold unto the present time
The duchy won by fraud and crime.
Bastard! give back what 's not your own,
Else fearful shall my wrath be shown;
My vassals arm'd with sword and brand
Shall desolate and waste your land,
And my bold knights shall in their might
Crush all who dare resist my right."†

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* Count Alan certainly died of poison, and the duke of Normandy was generally believed to have hired the assassin.

† Chroniques Anglo-Normandes, i. 184.—Benedict or Benoit de Sainte More was an Anglo-Norman, whose name in modern times would be Bennet Seymour: he was employed by Henry I. to write the chronicles of the Norman dynasty. Mr. Guest has remarked that his metres are English, though his language is French. The Anglo-Norman French is, however, so composite a language, that it would probably be more intelligible in London than in Paris; and the chronicles before us almost naturally run into the verse of the early English romances, without any effort on the part of the translator.

William, we are told, was much alarmed by this message. He adopted the same infamous means to deliver himself from Conan that he had formerly employed to rid himself of count Alan. The chamberlain of the Breton was bribed to poison the bugle-horn which his master used in hunting; and, to make assurance doubly sure, he spread the venom over his saddle and within his gloves. So fatal was the poison used, that Conan fell dead as he was blowing a blast to summon his hounds, a very few days after the return of his messenger from the court of Normandy.* Eudes, Conan's successor, adopted a different course of policy; he not only made peace with William, but sent his two sons to aid him in the conquest of England.

Whilst these preparations were made in Normandy, Tostig, having been joined by his Norwegian allies, had invaded the northern division of England and laid siege to York. The romantic particulars of this brief campaign are given at such full length in every modern history of England, that they need not here be repeated. All have heard of the ominous dreams which the soldiers of Norway related to their leader for the purpose of dissuading him from the expedition;—the victories which he won over the northern earls;—the imminent danger of York when the Saxon king arrived with unexpected

* Chron. Ang.-Norm. ubi suprà.—The writer of the chronicle is far from showing any tenderness for William's memory in his account of the event.

speed to its relief;—Harold's generous offer of forgiveness and a share of his kingdom to Tostig, and his stern refusal to give the Norwegian more land than would serve for his grave;—Tostig's determination not to sever himself from his allies;—the sanguinary battle that ensued;—and the last glorious victory won by the Anglo-Saxon race. Three days after the overthrow of the Norwegians, William and his Normans effected a landing at Pevensey in Sussex.

Harold's victory in the north of England was the cause of his ruin: he believed that the same promptitude which had enabled him to triumph in the north would be attended with equal success in the south; he rejected the council of those who advised him to devastate the country through which the Normans should pass, and not to hazard a general engagement until he was joined by the northern earls Edwin, Morkar, and Waltheof the son of Siward. He pressed forwards to save the kingdom from the devastations of the Normans, and the result of his precipitancy was the fatal battle of Hastings. Every history of England contains the details of the fight in which the English nation lost to foreigners that freedom which it required the labours of centuries to recover. What the Normans won by the sword, they held by the menace of the gibbet; the sword and the rope displaced for a long season the free institutions of the Saxon race.

Without entering into competition with any of the great writers who have in modern times collected all the particulars of this fight, and invested it with a dramatic interest which belongs to no other battle recorded in history, we may notice that the Norman minstrels, no less than the Saxon chroniclers, bear testimony to the valour and heroism of the English and their unfortunate king. They confess that the cause of the invaders was almost hopeless until Harold fell; that the fight was bravely maintained by his brothers around the royal standard until the shades of night began to fall, when, every Saxon chief of note being slain, the English army dispersed, and its ruin was irretrievable.

The widow of earl Godwin is said to have applied to the Conqueror for permission to give Christian burial to the remains of her gallant son. Two monks of the abbey of Waltham were sent to identify the body, but they could not distinguish the late king in the pile of corpses heaped on the spot where he fell. A lady, "Edith of the Swan-neck," to whom Harold had been attached before his accession to the throne, came to their aid; she recognized the corpse of her former lover by the tokens which affection had imprinted on her memory, and the last of the Saxon kings was hastily interred with "such maimed rites" as dread of provoking the Conqueror permitted. All the Norman writers mention the death of Harold, and several of them

slightly notice his funeral. Thus the Continuator of the Roman du Brut:

> There Harold fell: Lefwin and Gurth,
> Like him, lay lifeless on the earth;
> And England's noblest sons around
> Were cold, or gasping on the ground.
> This is the substance of my tale:
> Heav'n made the Saxon hearts to fail;
> The Normans won the fertile lands,
> And still retain them in their hands.
> Nine months, nine days, bold Harold reign'd,
> But then the duke his kingdom gain'd.
> They bore his corpse to Waltham's fane,
> And there his buried bones remain.
> From Jesus' birth the year we fix
> To be One thousand sixty-six.*

A very different tale was spread abroad in a subsequent age, which has been adopted by Sir Francis Palgrave in his valuable work on Anglo-Saxon history; it is just a counterpart to the Spanish legend of Roderic the last of the Goths, averring that Harold escaped from the field, was concealed two years in Winchester by a Saracen lady, that he became a hermit, and died at a very advanced age in the odour of sanctity. The utter inconsistency of this story with the recorded facts of history may be shown in a few words: it is not easy to explain how a Saracen lady could have found her way to Winchester; even if we suppose that this part of the tale was a mere blunder, it is impossible to account for the inaction of Harold during two years, in either of which he

* Chroniques Anglo-Normandes, i. 72.

might have had a fair chance of recovering his kingdom. The battle of Hastings did not give William the fourth part of England: it required three sanguinary campaigns to overcome the obstinacy of the Saxons; and, had they found a leader worthy of their confidence, it is all but certain that the Normans would have been driven back to their own land. But Edgar Atheling was too feeble to guide the Saxons, Harold's sons were too young, and a remnant of the jealousy felt towards the Danish race prevented the election of either of the northern earls Morkar and Edwin. Even without a recognized leader the Saxons made a noble struggle. "Their resistance was not a flame casually lighted up by the oppression of rulers; it was the defensive warfare of a nation who took up arms to preserve, not to recover, their independence. There are few examples of a people who have suffered more for national dignity and legitimate freedom." *

During this struggle, of which Englishmen may well be proud,—for it never was abandoned until the liberties of the country were won back from the descendants of the Norman invaders,—it is utterly incredible that Harold could have acted the part of a passive spectator. The legend, indeed, says that he vainly applied for aid to the duke of Saxony and the king of Denmark: but those who were called Saxons in the eleventh century had a very slight affinity of race with the conquerors

* Sir James Mackintosh, Hist. of England, i. 108.

of the Britons, so that no one would have dreamed of seeking their aid; and the king of Denmark, so far from being unwilling to aid his relatives, actually sent a fleet to maintain the claims of the son of Harold. The expedition failed from a variety of causes, but the fact of its occurrence sufficiently establishes the falsehood of the legend.*

In a future chapter we shall investigate some of the earlier events in the great struggle by which the English nation won back some portion of their Saxon institutions from the Norman aristocracy. It only now remains to give some sketch of the tyranny which the Conqueror established in England, and this cannot be better done than by quoting the words of the Saxon Chronicle. The following passage is the close of a very striking notice of William, supposed upon plausible grounds to have been written by Wulstan, the venerable bishop of Worcester.

"Assuredly in his time had the people much

* In almost all the great revolutions of the middle ages, we find similar legends respecting the escape of vanquished sovereigns. The romantic tale of Roderic the last of the Goths has been already quoted; in like manner our Edward II., having been barbarously murdered by the partisans of his queen, "the she-wolf of France," was believed by many to have escaped to the continent, and the earl of Kent was executed for entering into a plot to effect his restoration; Richard II. was also reported to have escaped from Henry of Lancaster; and James IV. of Scotland, who fell at Flodden, was long expected to return by a portion of his subjects, persuaded that he had gone on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

toil and very much sufferings. Castles he let men build, and the poor people sorely harass. The king was so very stern! And he took from his liege-man many a mark of gold, and moreover many a hundred of pounds of silver. That he took with right and with mickle unright from his people with little need. He was fallen into covetousness, and greediness he loved withal.

"He laid out a mickle deer-forest, and he laid down laws therewith, — that whoso slew hart or hind, that him they should blind. He forbad to kill the harts, so also the boars. As strongly he lov'd the great game as though he had been their father. Eke he made laws for the hares, that they should freely pass. His rich men bemoaned it, and the poor men murmured at it; but he was so stern that he recked not all their hate. But they must, withal, the king's will follow, if they would live, or land have — land or possessions, or even his peace. Well-away! that any man should be so proud, himself uplift, and over all men vaunt! May the Almighty God show to his soul mercy, and grant him of his sins forgiveness!" *

* Guest's History of English Rhythms, ii. 151.

CHAPTER X.

The Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland.

In treating of the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland, it will be necessary to take a preliminary view of the condition of that country previous to the landing of the conquerors; and this cannot be done without the risk of giving offence to a very credulous, very enthusiastic, and very irritable class,—the believers in the ancient civilization and glory of Ireland. The principal materials for a sketch of the condition of Ireland previous to the Anglo-Norman invasion are the Lives of the Saints, some meagre annals of ecclesiastical chronicles, monastic legends, the songs of family bards, and the Brehon laws. Of these, the Lives of the Saints may be at once dismissed as religious romances possessing far less of historic authority than the Waverley Novels. The legendary histories compiled by the monks are similar in their character to those of Nennius and Geoffrey of Monmouth, but contain a greater admixture of giants, necromancers, obscure allegories, and extravagant fables: imitations of Ovid's Metamorphoses, some of which surpass the original in whim-

sicality, are gravely given as undoubted facts;* the founders of the Irish families are brought into contact with the heroes of classical antiquity, and even with the patriarchs of the Pentateuch, for we are assured that the founder of the O'Neill family, from whom the river Nile, according to the legend, takes its name, hospitably entertained Moses and the Israelites when they were departing from Egypt.

* As a specimen of these stories borrowed from Ovid's Metamorphoses, we shall give the Irish version of the tale of Midas, or rather a parody of it, written some years ago, and which we have some vague recollection of having previously published in one of the periodicals. The incident is gravely recorded as a fact by the native historians of Ireland, but we found it impossible to preserve gravity in the repetition.

In Ireland's fair isle, while "great, glorious, and free,
First flower of the earth, and first gem of the sea,"—
Ere 'neath Saxon invaders all matters had gone ill,
Or Moore gave quotations to Daniel O'Connell,—
Lived a monarch named Lynch, of whom bards used to sing,
That, but for the L, he was "each inch a king."

So great was his goodness, so brilliant his glory,
Every subject he had was a downright good Tory,
Every priest preached the doctrine of passive obedience,
Every lawyer insisted on strictest allegiance,
Every poet was singing his rights so divine—
In verses, however, no better than mine.

Yet, amid this felicity, sorrow and care
On the face of the king was the sign of despair:
The courtiers, in vain, strove his grief to beguile;
And jests, though official, produced not a smile.—
What was it could thus o'er the monarch prevail?
He wore a large wig—and "thereby hangs a tale."

Like

The Brehon laws and the songs of the Bards enable us to form a more correct estimate of the condition of the native Irish. These laws exhibit to us a state of society advanced only to an imperfect civilization. We find that the monarchs were supported by tribute paid in every kind of cattle, mantles, clothes, and utensils; that they were obliged to purchase the personal services of their attendants by donations of a similar kind; that they could claim to be received into the houses

Like other old ladies, Dame Nature at times
Indulges vagaries not far short of crimes:
She had shaped Lynch's ears so long, hairy, and coarse,
You would think they were stolen from the head of a horse;
As if with French punning his senses to bother,
She really had given him a *mère* as his mother.

The wig, very long (we mean both time and space),
From beholders had hidden the monarch's disgrace;
But, alas! all his care and precaution miscarried!—
The very month after the luckless wight married,—
Perhaps for a time Love had banished his fears,—
His eyes saw but the queen, while the queen saw his ears!

A woman—a secret——O mortals! say whether
The two for an hour e'er existed together!
Queen Lynch started up while as yet it was dark,
And wandered in torture all night through the park;
But daylight gave courage, her silence she broke,
And whispered the tale to a sturdy old oak.

Prepare ye the banquet!—let music be near
With its liveliest notes to enliven our cheer!—
Oh! blind to the future, you know not, poor king!
What sorrow, what horror that banquet will bring!—
They have cut down the oak-tree, and just from its middle
Have shaped for the orchestra royal a fiddle.

The

of inferior chieftains when they made a royal progress, and could demand their services for a limited period in war. The most outrageous offences were punished by an *Eric*, or fine; and it will be sufficient proof of the little value set upon life, when we state that the Eric to be paid to a son for the murder of his father was fixed at twenty-one kine. Sumptuary laws regulated the nature and price of female dress, and extravagance was strictly prohibited to those ladies who had not brought a dowry to their husbands. Such rules sufficiently show that the nation was yet very imperfectly improved in social life, but even this growing civilization was almost exterminated by the ravages of the Northern barbarians. A writer of distinguished ability, whose premature death prevented his attaining that rank in English literature which his talents, his research, and his

The feast is prepared, and the tables are set;
The nobles and princes together are met;
The music strikes up—but, hark! roof and rafter
At the very first notes all are pealing with laughter,
For the fiddle squeaks out, ere the bow moves an inch,
"There are horses' long ears on the head of king Lynch!"

MORAL.

Take warning from this, all ye ignorant sinners,
Who hire bands of music to grace public dinners,
And require that the trumpet its war-note should blow
For "Charge ye the glasses!" or "Charge ye the foe!"
Drive away the musicians from each festive meeting,
And, while at the table, mind nothing but eating."

powers of analysis, however obscured by prejudice and party, would assuredly have won, has delineated the condition of Ireland at the time of the Norman invasion with a graphic fidelity which cannot be surpassed.* The following is his description:

"There is good reason to believe, that, in the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries, the Irish were possessed of a respectable share of those benefits which result from industry, laws, and literature; with, perhaps, as much tranquillity, public and private, as was enjoyed by Greece at its most brilliant period. But, amidst the rapine and massacre of the three following ages, their spirit and their imperfect civilization sunk together beneath the ferocity of the Northern corsairs. The degenerate race which now appeared inherited the mingled vices of their fathers and their enemies; the grossness and turbulence, without the generosity, of barbarians; the corruptions, without the arts, of more cultivated life. At the date of the arrival of the first English adventurers, every chieftain, from the dynast of a province to the tiny potentate of a realm which might be enclosed within a modern barony, was a king. The annual claim of his superior lord was settled, according to circumstances, by a tribute or a battle; but within his own territory he exercised all the powers of bar-

* The Rev. Dr. Phelan, in his Policy of the Church in Ireland.

barous royalty. By a custom which seems to have once extended from the Himlaya mountains to the Atlantic, he was sole proprietor of all the land in his sept: the clansmen held their portions during the pleasure of their chief, and there were some national usages which added to the uncertainty of this precarious tenure. All dignities were elective: vacancies were made, and elections carried, most frequently by the sword; so that every change of masters, in every tribe, threatened, if it did not cause, a new partition of lands. No special claims to inheritance were derived from primogeniture, legitimacy, or kindred. Upon the death or emigration of a vassal, his holding reverted to the common stock: on the other hand, as youths grew to maturity or strangers became naturalized, the older occupants contracted their bounds to make room for the new settlers. These eternal fluctuations had their full effect upon the face of the country and the character of the people: there was no motive to industry, no spirit, except for turbulent adventure; cultivation was limited to the demands of nature and the landlord, and the fertility of the soil abused by a wretched system of husbandry.* A distinction was

* It was one of the articles of *impeachment* brought in 1613 against the lord-deputy Chichester, that his officers levied a fine on the Irish *for ploughing with horses by the tail.* (See *Desiderata Curiosa Hibernica,* vol. i.) In 1648, it was one of the articles of *peace* between the duke of Ormond and another Ca-

acknowledged between a slave and a freeman; but it seems to have denoted no other difference than this, that the freeman had the right of choosing his tribe:—in choosing *that*, he chose his master. Excluded from landed property by a selfish despotism, and from commercial wealth by the circumstances of a country which had no money, no trade, and few manufactures, all who could not boast of princely blood were condemned to a state of hopeless dependence. The lords had neither the intelligence nor the generosity to give liberal institutions; and the Brehon code, minute in its decisions between vassal and vassal, had not ventured to restrain their licentious misrule. Ireland had no towns except a few seaports which were still in the hands of the Danish enemy; there were therefore no corporations to diversify the bleak uniformity of feudal barbarism, to plead a chartered exemption from servitude, or reflect the dangerous image of plebeian rights."

A very curious bardic history, recently translated from the original Irish, enables us to form a pretty correct estimate of the social and political condition of Ireland in the tenth century. It describes a journey taken by the prince of Aileach, or, as it would be pronounced in English, Ely, for the purpose

tholic Association, "that two acts lately passed in this kingdom, the one prohibiting the ploughing with horses by the tail, and the other prohibiting the burning of oats in the straw, be repealed."

of obtaining hostages from the toparchs, or local chieftains, who were likely to oppose his succession to what may be called the *suzeraineté* of Ireland, of which he was the heir-apparent. The account was written by Cormocan, one of those bards who were maintained by every Irish chief in the double capacity of poet and historian; and, though it is in the form of verse, it has all the minuteness of detail belonging to a prose narration.*

Aileach, or Ely, was the palace of the kings of Ulster of the Hy-Niall race: it is called by the bard "the stone-built palace," to distinguish it from the other Irish fortresses, which were mere enclosures of earth; and is said to have been erected by a foreigner named Frigreme or Fririn, from which it may be inferred that the Irish in the tenth century were imperfectly, if at all, acquainted with the art of masonry. The princely hero of the poem is "Muircheartach of the race of Niall;" his name, which is not uncommon in Ireland, has been softened into Murkertagh, Murtagh, Moriarty, and at length Anglicized into the aristocratic name of Mortimer: we shall adhere to Murkertagh, as more nearly representing the Irish

* The author has availed himself of an analysis of this curious poem, which he had previously published as a review in a popular periodical. The translation forms part of the first volume of the valuable collection of tracts in the course of publication under the patronage of the Irish Archæological Society.

pronunciation, In history the hero is distinguished as "Murkertagh of the Leather-cloaks;" because, on his expedition to collect hostages, he furnished his soldiers with hides as a substitute both for cloaks and tents. The poet has not forgotten this circumstance in his account of the bivouac at Aillinn, the hill of Allen, in the county of Kildare, where such a protection was truly desirable in a cold night.

"We were a night at the cold Ailinn:
The snow came from the north-east;
Our only houses, without distinction of ranks,
Were our strong leather-cloaks."

Murkertagh, after quitting his royal home, marched towards Ath-Cliath, the present city of Dublin. It was then occupied by the Danes, whom the poet calls "Galls," a name still applied to foreigners by the native Irish. As these invaders had been but recently compelled to do homage to the *suzerain* of Ireland, it was obviously necessary to obtain some security for their allegiance.

"We were a night at fair Ath-Cliath;
It was not pleasing to the Galls.
There was a damsel in the strong fortress
Whose soul the son of Niall was.
She came forth until she was outside the walls,
Although the night was constantly bad.
A plentiful supply from an abundant store was given by the Danes,
To Murkertagh the son of Niall,
Of bacon, of fine good wheat,
Together with penalties for bloodshed in red gold.

"Joints of meat and fine cheese were given
By the very good, the very beautiful queen:
And there was given with liberality
A coloured mantle for every chieftain.
We carried off with us Sitiric the wealthy;
To me was assigned the duty of keeping him;
And there was not put upon him a manacle
Nor polished tight fetter."

When the expedition reached the river Fliodais in Ossory, the soldiers were hospitably entertained by the toparch of that country, who was the father-in-law of Murkertagh.

"We were a night at the clear Fliodais:
We received food and ale,
And hogs were sent to our camp
By the hospitable chief of Ossory.
The reward of their hospitality was given to them,
To the men of Ossory in the assembly;—
Not a man of them returned to his home
Without a beautiful present of dress."

Opposition was menaced when Murkertagh reached Magh Feinin, or what is now called "the Golden Vale," in the county of Tipperary. Callaghan, the toparch or petty king of Munster, was the great rival of Murkertagh, but, not being prepared to resist an unexpected invasion,—for this expedition was undertaken in the depth of winter,—he dissuaded his subjects from resistance; notwithstanding this moderation, he was carried off heavily fettered as a hostage.

" We were a night in Magh Feinin
Assuredly and certainly.
A night at Cashel of Munster:
There the great injury was inflicted (on the men of Munster).
There were arrayed against us three battalions brave,
Impetuous, red, tremendous;
So that each party confronted the other
In the centre of the great plain.
We cast our cloaks off us,*
As became the subjects of a great king.
The comely, the bright Murkertagh was
At this time engaged in playing chess.
The hardy Callaghan said,
(And to us it was victory,)
'O men of Munster, men of renown,
Oppose not the race of Eoghan! †
Better that I go with them as a hostage,
Than that we should all be driven to battle.
They will kill man for man,
The noble people of Murkertagh.'
We took with us, therefore, Callaghan the just,
Who received his due honour;
Namely, a ring of fifteen ounces on his hand,
And a chain of iron stout on his leg."

The insulting irony of the last stanza is highly characteristic of the barbarism of the age: tenderness to a vanquished, or even submissive rival, formed no part of the moral code either of the

* So Sir Walter Scott in his spirited version of a Highland pibroch:

" Cast your plaids, draw your blades,
Forward each man set."

† The Donegal branch of the great Hy-Niall, or O'Neill, family.

prince or his poet; in fact, we find that the iniquitous seizure of "Callaghan the Just"—a name not given to him in mockery, but universally bestowed upon him for his eminent virtues,—was regarded as a victory by Murkertagh and his followers. They celebrated their brilliant achievement by a dance, with a musical accompaniment, the effect of which must have been far superior to the castanets of the Moriscoes.

"Music we had on the plain and in our tents;
Listening to its strains we danced a while:
There, methinks, a heavy noise was made
By the shaking of our hard cloaks."

After having thus extracted music from hides, the army took several other hostages from the southern chiefs, and then turned homewards. When they reached a small lake on the outskirts of Donegal, Murkertagh sent expresses to his queen with orders to make preparations for the reception of himself, his army, and his reluctant guests. The terms in which the message was conveyed to the lady "Dubhdaire, of the Black Hair," proves that the age of chivalrous respect for females had not yet commenced in Ireland.

"From the green Lochan-na-neagh
A page was dispatched to Aileach,
To tell Dubhdaire, of the Black Hair,
To send women to cut rushes.*

* Rushes were used as a substitute for carpets in England even in the time of the Stuarts. We find them enumerated

"'Rise up, O Dubhdaire,' said the page,
'Here is company coming to thy house:
Attend each man of them
As a monarch should be attended.'"

"The black-haired queen" made ample provision for her guests; this, indeed, was necessary, for mortal feuds were the result of anything like neglect in providing good entertainment: another bardic legend relates, that the most sanguinary war known in Ireland for more than a century originated in a king having set before one of his powerful vassal-chiefs a hen-egg instead of a goose-egg.* The bill of fare at the dinner given by Murkertagh's queen to the hostages is detailed with laudable precision by the poet:

"Ten score hogs—no small work!—
Ten score cows, two hundred oxen,
Were slaughtered at the festive Aileach
For Murkertagh of the Great Fetters.

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among other contrivances for chairs and tables in that singular poem "Gillo's Feast," which is a coarse but faithful description of Irish manners in the beginning of the eighteenth century.

"Of rushes there were benches made,
On which the meat was partly laid;
But all the mutton that was singed
Was laid on doors that were unhinged:
So that we all may truly say,
Gillo kept open house that day."

* Battle of Magh-Rath, published by the Irish Archæological Society.

Three score vats of curds,*
Which banish'd the hungry look of the army,
With a sufficiency of cheering mead,
Were given by the magnanimous Murkertagh.
Twelve vats of choice mead
Were given to the kings of Erin;
The dinner of an hundred of each kind of food nobly
Was given gratuitously to them from the queen."

The queen's liberality at this feast was repaid with usurious interest by Murkertagh out of the plunder he had collected in his recent expedition; and, from the way in which this part of the transaction is recited, we incidentally learn that the possessions of husband and wife were deemed separate and distinct at the period in which the poem was written. The bard concludes with an account of the delivery of the captives or hostages to the monarch of Ireland, and the praises bestowed upon Murkertagh for the ability he had shown in conducting the expedition.

The state of manners described in the poem is sufficiently curious to justify the lengthened analysis which we have given of it; there is scarcely

* Curds and clabber, or thickened milk, are also enumerated among the dainties at Gillo's feast in the poem already quoted:

"The curds and all the three-leav'd grass,
With lumps of butter, eaten was.
Of bonny clabber at this feast,
Were lapp'd three barrels at the least,
Beside the buttermilk and whey,
As authors of good credit say."

any necessity for adding that it describes a social condition not many degrees removed from barbarism. That an army which did not exceed a thousand men should make the circuit of Ireland and everywhere enforce submission, is sufficient evidence that the septs, or tribes, were thinly scattered, and that there was no principle of union among the toparchs. This custom of sending out an expedition to obtain hostages was continued to the time of the Anglo-Norman invasion. Among the ancient chronicles written in the rhymes of the Norman French under the Plantagenets is one said to have been written from the dictation of Maurice Regan, secretary to Dermot M'Murrough, the last king of Leinster, containing a pretty full account of all the circumstances which induced that monarch to claim the assistance of Strongbow. In this chronicle, which bears internal evidence of authenticity, we are told, "Dermot invaded O'Neill and the king of Ulster, whom he compelled to give hostages; he likewise constrained O'Carroll to send him his son as a pledge into Leinster."*

Many of the circumstances of Strongbow's invasion, as described by Regan, are very similar to what the poet has described in his narrative of Murkertagh's marauding expedition: both found the Irish septs so dissevered, and the toparchs so regardless of their common interest, as to ren-

* Harris's Pieces of Irish History, No. i.

der their conquest an easy task. Murkertagh's payment to his queen in cattle and plunder confirms the statement of Giraldus Cambrensis, that the Irish at the time of the Anglo-Norman invasion, and indeed for many years after it, had little or no circulating medium. This is further proved by the testimony of some French gentleman who accompanied Richard II. in his unfortunate Irish campaign, which afforded the duke of Lancaster the means of wresting from him his kingdom. The writer states that he was present at the interview between the insurgent M'Murrough and the earl of Gloucester. "Among other gentlemen," he says, "I was one that went with him to see M'Murrough, his behaviour, estate, and forces, and what issue the treaty would grow unto. Between two woods, not far from the sea, M'Murrough, attended by multitudes of the Irish, descended from a mountain, mounted upon a horse without a saddle, which cost him, as it was reported, four hundred cows; for in this country they barter by exchange, horses for beasts, and one commodity for another, having no ready money." *

It is not necessary to add more to what has been already stated, to show that in the twelfth century Ireland was in such a distracted and uncivilized condition that it tempted to invasion and invited to conquest. "If William might yet have

* Harris's Pieces of Irish History, No. ii.

lived two years," says the Saxon Chronicle, "he had won Ireland by his prudence, and without any weapons." It is a fact not generally known, that something like a voluntary tender of allegiance was made to William the Conqueror by the descendants of the Danes who were settled in Ireland. They hailed his conquest of England as a triumph that prognosticated the revival of their own power and eminence; they relinquished their old name of Ostmen for the more honourable title of Normans, and sent ambassadors to congratulate William on his success. At the same time they broke off their connection with the Irish church, and united themselves to that of England by sending over their bishop-elect of Dublin to be consecrated by Lanfranc archbishop of Canterbury. This proceeding involved many important considerations which are not apparent on its surface: the Irish church had not received the organization which it had become the policy of the popes to establish and render uniform throughout Christendom; it was for the purpose of completing this organization that Hildebrand favoured and encouraged the Norman invasion of England, and his successors were anxious that the same course of policy should be pursued towards Ireland. It has been long a theme of controversy, whether there were any differences of doctrine between the Irish church and the churches subject to the see of Rome; the question is very difficult, if not impossible, to be

decided, for neither church had a systematic creed or recognized articles of religion. What is now called Popery, or Romanism, was not digested into a system until the meeting of the council of Trent; and we are not aware of any source, save the individual opinions of certain of its prelates, from whence a formal creed of the ancient Irish could be deduced. But the political organization of that church is a very different matter; we have abundant proof that it had not undergone those changes which the policy of the popes had gradually introduced into most of the continental churches. The Irish ecclesiastics took no oath of allegiance to the pope, they never appealed to Rome for the decision of ecclesiastical causes, and the papal legates had no jurisdiction in the country. Now, it was the object of the papacy to subvert the independence of national churches, and to bring all Christendom under subjection to one spiritual head.

Let us not be so far misunderstood as to be supposed to impute wicked and corrupt motives to the Roman pontiffs in forming and prosecuting this design; they did not assail the independence of national churches, until the churches sought protection from the tyranny of the "men of the sword:" but for the exertions made by Hildebrand and his successors against tyrannical monarchs and profligate nobles, Europe would probably have fallen under Asiatic despotism, or relapsed into the anarchy

of barbarism. On this subject we may be permitted to repeat what we have already stated in another work.*

"The most powerful opponent of the dissociating tendencies of feudalism was the Christian Church: it preserved within it the ideas of order, law, morality; the equality of all men before God; and the immutable principles of justice. It may be said, without we hope giving offence to anybody, that the church had in these ages greatly fallen from its original purity, both in doctrine and in discipline, and that there were few among the clerical body in the eleventh century whom the Apostles would have recognized as brothers. But we trust that it may be equally said without offence, that to the church as then constituted, and to the clergy as then organized, humanity owes a deep debt of gratitude for fighting and winning the battle of freedom and civilization. There is probably no part of the Romish creed, and not one of the Romish institutions, that was not of vast importance in the great struggle which the church had to maintain; and of the doctrines and practices on which the nineteenth century passes just sentence of condemnation, there is scarcely one which could have been spared seven hundred years ago, without imminent peril to the great cause of human civilization and social happiness. In the great majority of instances, the errors were forced upon the ecclesias-

* Natural History of Society, ii. 214.

tical body; and, in all the rest, the error arose from attempting to render universal some formulary that had been devised for a special purpose.

"The feudal nobility was isolated, not merely as a body, but individually: the church linked itself with every class of society. The bishops were the companions of princes, the priests claimed reverence in the baronial hall, the preaching friars and monks brought consolation to the cottage of the suffering peasant: thus everywhere offering a strong contrast between sacerdotal universality and feudal exclusiveness. When distinctions as rigid and more onerous, because more obviously artificial than *caste*, were established in every form of social life, the church scarcely knew any aristocracy but that of talent: once received into holy orders, the serf lost all traces of his bondage; he was not merely raised to an equality with his former lord, but he might aspire to dignities which cast those of temporal princes into the shade. Under such circumstances, the church was inexpressibly dear to the suffering people, and an object of jealousy, not unmingled with hatred, to the feudal tyrants. The ecclesiastical power was daily increasing, as its benefits were more sensibly experienced; the right of sanctuary —in late ages one of its worst abuses, but in the days of unlicensed passions one of its most beneficent institutions—soon placed the church in an attitude of hostility to the nobility, and gave the signal for a struggle, in which the latter body, for

the first time, learned to estimate the importance of the people.

"In every age, and in every land, a church exposes its purity to imminent peril by taking the lead in any political struggle: defeat is its ruin, and victory its corruption. It suffers equally in its collective capacity and in its individual members, for the union of the priest and the demagogue forms a character dangerous to the peace of society. But history presents us no instance of such a condition becoming general, save when there is a popular opinion that substantial wrongs exist, against which the members of the sacerdotal order are the only persons able or willing to find a remedy. Such an opinion was formed throughout Europe by those who groaned under feudal domination, and the people could not reasonably be blamed for seeking protection from the priests, when their lords, or rather the lords of their soil, left them no other refuge. It was clearly a matter of necessity, that the church should be kept independent of the temporal power, at a time when the temporal power crushed into ruin everything that came within its grasp.

"The power of the papacy, as an institution, was directly proportioned to the strength of the opinion on which it was founded, and the strength of that opinion must be measured by the circumstances by which it was engendered. It is necessary to keep this philosophic truth steadily in view, because one of the most common arguments urged against the civilizing influences of Christianity is the alleged

delinquencies of the church in the middle ages. But if we take into consideration the nature of the times in which these delinquencies are said to have occurred, we may perhaps discover that what we have censured merits our eulogy, and what we have scorned deserves our gratitude. It is not enough to show that Christianity, as first taught, was a blessing: we must further show, that, throughout the whole course of its history, it has been a benefactor to humanity."*

It might be supposed that the prelates of the different churches would have offered some resistance to the claim of the papacy for supremacy over them, and they did so wherever the ecclesiastical body had sufficient power within itself to maintain its independence of the state without foreign or adventitious aid. But this was not the case in Ireland: the bishops were either directly nominated by the chieftains of the several tribes, or subjected to their approbation after having been elected by the priesthood; ordination and consecration did not

* In the controversial works of some Protestants, the importance of this truth has been often forgotten, and infidelity has gained in consequence. It would be wellif, in the heat of argument, persons would remember that the errors of Romanism are not absolute falsehoods, but corrupted truths; and that, in the rage for sweeping condemnation, they may pass sentence on the truth, when they merely mean to stigmatize the falsehood. In the particular instance to which reference is made in the text, some have written as if the world would have been better without any church in the middle ages; it seems, therefore, not unnecessary to point out the services which the church, however corrupt, was still able to render to the great cause of human advancement.

exonerate ecclesiastics from the customary duties of clansmen; and they remained amenable to the ordinary Brehon jurisprudence. In such a distracted country as Ireland, the bishops must have felt that their position was far more precarious, and infinitely less dignified than that which was occupied by their episcopal brethren in England and on the Continent. Such marauders as Murkertagh were not always distinguished by their respect for clerical sanctity; and an Irish poem, to which we have already referred, declares that the bishops and clergy often suffered from the rapacity* of the purveyors for such a feast as that given by "the black-haired queen." In fact, the calamities of a long war are ascribed to a robbery of a saint's basket of goose-eggs.

With the avowed intention of introducing Christian order into Ireland, pope Adrian granted the *suzeraineté* of Ireland to Henry II.; and the Irish prelates zealously exerted themselves to render the grant available. Estimated by the weights and measures of modern political morality, such a transaction would merit all the reprobation which has been bestowed upon it: we should be justified in exclaiming against the ambition of the pope in granting that which he did not possess, for the purpose of obtaining that to which he had no right; and we might more severely reprobate the treason of the Irish prelates, who sold the independence of

* Battle of Magh-Rath.

their country, in the hope of raising themselves from the condition of serfs to petty chieftains, from that of peers to powerful monarchs. But this would be a most unfair mode of judging human actions; we must take into account the circumstances of the period, the intelligence of those engaged in the transaction, and the rules of conduct established in their age. There can be little doubt that the pope honestly believed it impossible to establish social order on any but an ecclesiastical basis; and that the Irish prelates deemed it fruitless to attempt establishing a church, possessing the political powers and privileges which it was the fashion of the age to believe essential to a church, in a land distracted by civil dissensions, and divided amongst barbarous and haughty chieftains, ready to engage in sanguinary wars for no better cause than a goose-egg.

But the conduct of the pope and the prelates may be defended on higher grounds: the establishment of some recognized government was the great want of Ireland; and mutual jealousy of the chiefs, aggravated by hereditary and family feuds, rendered it impossible for a native monarch to establish such a central authority as would be sufficiently powerful to maintain tranquillity. The *suzeraineté* of Henry, had it been established energetically and completely, would have been a blessing to Ireland, but adverse circumstances prevented the English monarch from acquiring more than

a nominal authority; and the want of central power, instead of being remedied, was aggravated by having the nominal authority of the English monarch introduced as a competitor, instead of being supreme over all.

The papal grant was not made to Henry II. from any partiality of the holy see for that monarch: during the greater part of his reign, he was vehemently opposed to the pretensions of the papacy, and to the claims for ecclesiastical independence so haughtily made by Thomas-à-Becket. His dislike of the papal power was probably one of his reasons for allowing the bull which granted him the *suzeraineté* of Ireland to remain several years in abeyance, and his attention was further diverted from such an object by the rebellions of his sons and by his continental wars. It is probable that he hoped to have the kingdom of Ireland formally tendered to him through the influence of the Irish prelates, and there is no doubt that schemes for effecting this object were propounded and discussed in several synods. It is impossible to guess whether the prelates would have eventually succeeded in procuring a peaceful recognition of English supremacy; but an accidental circumstance, which led to an armed invasion, put an end to negociations and brought the Normans into Ireland before Henry and his partisans could make any previous arrangements for such a crisis.

All the English historians have so strangely misrepresented the circumstances which led to the first Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland, that it will be necessary to trace them with some minuteness. On the death of O'Brien, the last monarch of Ireland who could properly be called good or great, the enemies of his family assailed the kingdom of Munster, and reduced it to a state of most deplorable weakness. Such was the gratitude shown for the deliverance of the country from the power of the Danes by the glorious victory of Clontarf? The kings of the north and west became the principal competitors for supreme power in Ireland; the O'Briens being scarcely able to preserve their hereditary possessions, and quite incapacitated from making any exertion to obtain mastery over others.

"Turlogh O'Connor, king of Connaught, nominally obtained this dignity; but he was fiercely opposed by O'Lachlan, chief of the northern sept of Hy-Niall, aided by many other princes of Ulster and Leinster. After a long and desultory warfare the rivals agreed to divide the sovereignty between them; but, like all similar expedients, the peace obtained by this arrangement was partial and temporary, and war was soon renewed between the partisans of the competitors. O'Rourke, prince of Breffiny (the present county of Leitrim), was a warm supporter of the O'Connors; while his neighbour, Dermod Mac-Murchad, king of Leinster, was as vigorous a supporter of the Hy-Niall

dynasty. Their political differences were further heightened by personal causes. O'Rourke, far advanced in years, had married Dervorghal, a princess of Meath, that might have been his daughter, and had soon cause to suspect that her affections were fixed on the youthful Dermod, the fame of whose beauty and courtesy was spread through all the surrounding septs. The war between the partisans of O'Connor and O'Lachlan was renewed; Dermod invaded the territories of O'Rourke, and carried away Dervorghal a willing captive into Leinster. The injured prince complained to O'Connor of the gross wrongs he had received; and the king of Connaught at once levied an army to support his ally. Dermod's territories were invaded before O'Lachlan could come to his assistance; but he purchased peace, by restoring the lady to her husband, and making compensation for the ravages his soldiers had committed in Breffiny (A.D. 1154). This event, which most historians assign as the immediate cause of the Anglo-Norman invasion, really occurred sixteen years before Dermod was driven into exile, and consequently before he had any necessity to ask for foreign assistance. On the death of Turlogh O'Connor, the undisputed sovereignty of Ireland was given to O'Lachlan; and the partisans of the Hy-Nialls immediately prepared to extend their dominions and punish their rivals (A.D. 1156). The fidelity of Dermod was richly rewarded; he was enabled to extend

his sway over many of the neighbouring septs, and soon reckoned among his vassals the kings of Ossory and Meath, the Danish lord of Dublin, and the toparchs who ruled in the districts which now form the counties of Wicklow, Carlow, and Wexford. The prince of Breffny had reason to dread the use which his rival might make of his newly acquired power; but, while Dermot was preparing utterly to destroy the power of O'Rourke, an unexpected event produced a complete revolution in Irish politics. O'Lachlan, after concluding a solemn treaty with Dunleve, prince of Ulad, (the present county of Down,) treacherously made him captive, and tore out his eyes in prison. This abominable perfidy roused the northern chieftains into insurrection: a rapid and general revolt took place; and, at the battle of Litterluin, O'Lachlan fell, and the power of his family was annihilated (A.D. 1167). Roderick O'Connor, the son of Turlogh, ascended the vacant throne, apparently without waiting for the forms of an election, and immediately prepared to avenge the wrongs which had been inflicted on the partisans of his family. The prince of Breffny was a willing assistant to the new monarch; and the feudatories of Dermot, anxious to regain their independence, readily promised to favour his designs. On the advance of O'Connor into Leinster, Dermot found himself deserted by all his vassals; and, unable to make any effective resistance, he set fire to Ferns, his

capital city, and fled with a small train to solicit the aid of foreigners. This is the account given by the native Irish historians, and it bears all the internal marks of truth. The assertion that Dermot was driven out as the ravisher of Dervorghal, rather than the partisan of O'Lachlan, rests solely on the authority of Giraldus Cambrensis, who, coming into the country as a stranger long after the transaction, might easily have mistaken a prominent though incidental circumstance for the principal cause of the war, especially as it was the occasion of the first act of hostility on the part of Turlogh O'Connor." *

Dermot's application to Henry appears to have been a recognition of that monarch's title to the lordship of Ireland. No other plausible reason can be assigned for that fugitive prince not seeking aid from the O'Briens, who were the hereditary rivals and enemies of the O'Connors, or from the king of Scotland, who was closely connected with the princes on the eastern coast of Ireland. Dermot landed at Bristol, then the great port of communication between England and Ireland: he learned that Henry was absent in Guienne; and thither he proceeded, accompanied by his secretary, Maurice Regan. Dermot presented himself before Henry as a vassal, swearing allegiance and performing the ceremony of liege homage; and this was not done subject to any stipulations for

* Taylor's Ireland, i. 43—45.

assistance, Henry being at that time far more ambitious of extending his provinces in France, than acquiring a new kingdom in Ireland. The Plantagenets, like the first of the Guelphs, were infatuated by a passionate love for their continental dominions; and the connection with Normandy was as injurious to England in the twelfth, as that with Hanover was in the eighteenth century. Henry, being unable at the moment to aid Dermot personally, gave the fugitive prince letters patent, authorizing him to obtain the aid of any of the Norman barons who would be disposed to attempt the adventure of a campaign in Ireland.

After William the Conqueror had subdued England and divided its broad lands amongst his followers, it was found that some adventurers had received no share in the spoils, and that there were no means of gratifying the cupidity of others whom the hope of obtaining estates had brought to the English court. William and his immediate successors granted to these captains letters of licence to conquer land in Wales: they easily raised little armies from the Normans, who had wasted their grants in dissipation; the Anglo-Saxons, who were weary of the Norman yoke; and the military vagabonds of the Continent, who maintained themselves alternately by robbery and by selling their swords to the highest bidder. William Rufus and Henry I. were compelled to engage the services of many of these companies of

mercenaries, or, to give them their proper name, banditti, in order to maintain themselves against the Normans, who were opposed to their usurpation of the crown in prejudice to the rights of their elder brother, Robert; and they had no means of paying the Brabançons, Hainaulters, and Flemings, whom they enlisted, but by confiscations and licences of conquest. Robert Fitz-Aymon, one of these leaders, acquired a territory which included three considerable towns in the Vale of Glamorgan; and his companions, Robert St. Quentin, John the Fleming, and Richard of Granville, became lords of villages and the founders of potent baronial families. Dreux or Drew, another of these captains, seized on the castle of Abergavenny; and Robert Chandos acquired such a vast estate, that he endowed a monastery, and bestowed it upon some monks whom he invited over from Normandy.

Gilbert, count of Eu in Normandy, was the most able and powerful of these conquerors: he collected an army, composed of Normans, Flemings, and Anglo-Saxons, with which he conquered the entire county of Pembroke. The Anglo-Saxons were the most numerous of Gilbert's followers, and their countrymen flocked to join them in their new territory in such numbers that Pembroke received the name of "Little England beyond Wales;" and to this day the county, in language, manners, and usages, is strikingly distinguished from the rest

of the principality. The Normans and the Flemings, though the less numerous, yet, as being the highest in rank in the conquering army, were most favoured in the distribution of lands; but the distinction of races among the conquerors appears to have been speedily effaced, and the language of the county was purely Anglo-Saxon. The conquest of Pembroke was completed by Gilbert's son Richard, earl of Strigul (now Chepstow), surnamed Strongbow, a little before the time of Dermot's application to Henry; and the earl consequently had at his disposal several troops of adventurers, whom he could not adequately reward without the acquisition of new lands.

The Irish, who traded with the coast of Wales, brought home intelligence of the formidable warriors who had established themselves in the county of Pembroke: they described their iron armour, their ponderous weapons, and their large Flemish horses; all objects of astonishment to the Irish, whose soldiers were all lightly armed, and whose horses were of a diminutive size, such as are still seen in the remote mountainous districts of the country. Dermot, fortified by the king's letter, resolved to apply for aid to those warriors, of whom he had heard so much; and, after a short delay in Bristol, he proceeded in search of auxiliaries to the county of Pembroke.

Although the Norman settlers in Wales had assumed those titles of dignity which designated

the possession of rank and riches in the middle ages, they found nothing strange in the king of Leinster's proposal that they should become his mercenary auxiliaries. They discussed his proposition like men of business; arranged the terms of their pay, the length of their service, and the shares they were to receive of the expected plunder. About four hundred warriors engaged themselves to Dermot; amongst whom were Robert Fitz-Stephen, Maurice Fitz-Gerald, Meiler Fitz-Henry, Maurice de Prendergast, Hervè de Mont-Marais, David Barry, and some other knights of reputation. They embarked at the western extremity of Pembroke, and steered right across for the nearest point on the opposite coast. The first landing of the invaders has been thus vividly described by a distinguished Irish orator:

"It was on the evening of the 23rd of August 1172, that the first hostile English footstep pressed the soil of Ireland.* It is said to have been a sweet and mild evening when the invading party entered the noble estuary formed by the conflux of the Suir, the Nore, and the Barrow at the city of Waterford. Accursed be that day in the memory of all future generations of Irishmen when

* There are two errors in this statement: the first landing of the Anglo-Normans was in the October of 1171: the invaders were not English, or Saxon, as the orator usually calls them; they were as much foreigners in England as in Ireland, and not less hostile to the Saxons than to the native Irish.

the invaders first touched our shores! They came to a nation famous for its love of learning, its piety, and its heroism; they came when internal dissensions separated her sons and wasted their energies. Internal traitors led on the invaders: her sons fell in no fight—her liberties were crushed in no battle; but domestic treason and foreign invaders doomed Ireland to seven centuries of oppression."

The first enterprise of the invaders was the siege of Wexford, a Danish town, which formed part of the dominions of Dermot. The garrison sallied out to meet their enemies; but the Normans, owing to the superiority of their arms, horses, and discipline, obtained an easy victory. This superiority did not avail them much in a siege; they hazarded an assault, and were repulsed; but the bishop of Ferns, who was in the town, persuaded the inhabitants to enter into a treaty with their sovereign, in consequence of which he and his allies were received into the town. The Normans marched through Wexford without halting, to attack those who had refused to submit. In a very short time the whole kingdom of Leinster was recovered for M'Murrough, his allies exhibiting more eagerness for his restoration than the monarch himself. Dermot was very grateful for the fidelity with which his allies had fulfilled their engagements: after having paid them the sum stipulated for their services, he invited them to remain in the country, promising that he would give them much larger

estates than those which they left behind in Wales. In the heat of his gratitude he bestowed the town and bailiwick of Wexford upon Fitz-Stephen and Fitz-Gerald, and presented to Hervè de Mont-Marais an extensive district on the coast between Waterford and Wexford.

Several of the neighbouring princes took up arms to punish Dermot for having invited foreigners into the land: the new settlers, whose cause was now identified with his, sent for aid to their brethren in England and Normandy; new bands of adventurers came into Leinster, and, amongst others, we find a troop commanded by Robert le Pauvre (the Poor man), who, without changing his humble surname, became the founder of a very influential family in Ireland. As their numbers multiplied, the adventurers felt the importance of having some great leader to whose authority they would all defer: they applied to Strongbow to place himself at their head; and, as the earl was deeply in debt, he cheerfully embraced such an opportunity of acquiring glory and getting out of the way of his creditors.

Earl Richard, or Strongbow, having received the hand of Eva, Dermot's daughter, proceeded to extend the dominion of his father-in-law over the eastern coast of Ireland. Waterford and Dublin, both cities founded by the Danes, were taken by storm; many places of less importance capitulated; and the Normans erected stone castles, which were

previously almost unknown in Ireland, to secure their acquisitions. Such rapid conquests and signal victories obtained by a few hundred invaders, appeared something supernatural to the native Irish: they attributed it to the vengeance of Heaven for their practice of slavery, and they immediately liberated all the Christian slaves in their possession. But this did not check the victorious career of Strongbow: new hosts of adventurers flocked to his standard; and he would probably have rendered himself master of Ireland, had not Henry II. become alarmed at his success, and commanded all his liege subjects to return from Ireland before a specified day, under pain of forfeiting all their goods and chattels.

Strongbow hastened to appease the jealousy of the English monarch by sending to him one of his lieutenants, Raymond le Gros, to declare that he held all his conquests subject to his sovereign's will. Henry at first refused to be appeased, and seized on Strongbow's English lands; but, when the earl's submission was repeated, he revoked the sentence of convocation, and appointed the earl his deputy in Ireland. It was at this crisis that the English king brought forward the papal bull, and made it the ground of his claim. Unfortunately, the recent murder of Thomas-à-Becket, and the use that had been made of it by the king of France and others, imposed upon Henry the necessity at this time of exhibiting more than ordinary obsequiousness to the court of Rome. He came over to Ireland more as

a vicar of the pope than as an independent sovereign; and claimed the allegiance of the princes as the result of the papal grant, not as the consequence of the victories gained by his subjects.

Jealousy of Strongbow was probably combined with the motives of policy which led the king to adopt this perilous course: he preferred being indebted for a kingdom to the influence of the clergy, rather than the valour of his turbulent barons; and he left the conquest incomplete, because he feared that, if the Normans achieved it, they would assume an inconvenient independence. It was publicly announced that the Irish were subdued for heresy, and that the conqueror's mission was to establish ecclesiastical order and true religion. Thus we find it stated in Harding's Chronicle:

> The king Henrye then conquered all Irlande
> By papal dome, there of his royaltee,
> The profits and revenue of the lande,
> The dominacion and the soverayntee —
> For error which agayn the spiritualtee
> They helde full long, and would not be correcte
> Of heresyes with which they were infecte.

This assertion rests not on the mere authority of the English Chronicles; it was affirmed by the Irish prelates themselves in a solemn synod at Cashel. "It is meet and very just," said these reverend flatterers, "that, as Ireland hath by Providence received a lord and king from England, so she may from the same receive a better order of

living. For to his royal grandeur are both the church and realm of England indebted for what they have hitherto obtained either of the benefits of peace or the increase of religion; since, before his coming into Ireland, evils of various kinds had from old times gradually overspread the nation, which by his power and goodness are now abolished."

Those who are acquainted with the state of Europe at this period will be at no loss to discover reasons enough for Henry's dread of great vassals in a distant province: he was himself, as duke of Normandy and earl of Anjou, a vassal of the crown of France, and yet was almost constantly at war with his sovereign; and his own vassals in Aquitaine were almost as uniformly in a state of insurrection against himself. No monarch felt more keenly the restrictions which feudalism imposed upon monarchy, and the perils to which a king was exposed from vassals possessing too large a share of power. He therefore discouraged the display of military prowess in Ireland, and he thus left individual enterprise to accomplish slowly, in the course of centuries, what Strongbow would have effected in one or two campaigns but for the interference of his sovereign.

Henry, and his successors for several centuries, made the Romish church their chief agent in preserving the allegiance of Ireland, and on all occasions declared that the papal grant was their only claim to the lordship of that kingdom. They did

not foresee the logical consequence, that, if at any time the king of England withdrew his allegiance from the pope, the Irish would be in some degree bound to refuse allegiance to him. It seemed clear, that, if the pope had a right to bestow Ireland upon certain conditions, he had an equal right to resume the grant when these conditions were ostentatiously violated. The court of Rome was too wise not to lay hold of the advantage thus offered; and, in fact, the sentence of deposition pronounced against king John was justified on the ground that his father Henry had recognized the papal right to bestow the kingdom of Ireland, and his ancestor, William the Conqueror, had similarly consented to receive England itself as a papal grant. The empty boast that "Ireland was not conquered," needs no other remark than that it easily might have been, if conquest had suited the crooked policy of the first of the Plantagenets. Though not conquered at the first burst of the invasion, when the calamity of conquest would have been but of temporary duration, it was left to be subdued piecemeal during centuries of suffering; and thus the distinction of race was perpetuated in its worst form—the ascendancy of the foreigner, and the subjection of the native.

The materials for a history of Ireland under the Plantagenets are very scanty, and frequently contradictory; but they abundantly prove, that under the Anglo-Norman rule the country became

the most miserable in Christendom. The Norman barons were constantly at war with the native Irish and with each other: adventurers came over to conquer lands, and carve out estates for themselves, with just as little respect for the rights of the natives as the first settlers in America showed for the claims of the Indians; the authority of the central government was disregarded on all sides, save when it was employed to give strength to a faction, or to transfer to the crown the responsibility for some iniquity perpetrated in its name by a dominant faction; and, had Edward Bruce possessed prudence and discretion equal to his bravery, the kingdom would undoubtedly have been wrested from England, and annexed to the crown of Scotland.

The Norman conquest of England was complete; the relations between the victors and the vanquished were defined and established: hence the amalgamation of the races began at a very early period, and before the termination of the wars of the Roses it would have been impossible to distinguish the Norman race from the Saxon. But in Ireland the conquerors and the conquered remained as distinct as the Turks and Greeks before the revolution which gave freedom to the latter, and stood in very nearly the same relation to each other. Cromwell's wars substituted an aristocracy of religion for that of race in Ireland: the descendants of the Norman barons, or "Lords

of the Pale," as they were called, fell under the iron yoke of the Puritans along with the descendants of the Irish chieftains; and it soon became impossible to distinguish one from the other in the common mass of suffering and of misery.

CHAPTER XI.

Brief Survey of the Greek Empire.

In concluding the account of the revolutions which had the principal share in producing the feudal and papal society of the middle ages, it will be necessary for us to take a very brief view of the Eastern empire, and its political relations with the Saracens and with Christendom. The Greeks hated the Latin church, not simply on account of the differences of creed, but also because the political power of the papacy was based on a usurpation of the rights of the emperors. The Latins returned the hate of the Greeks with interest; they refused to aid them when Constantinople was besieged by the Saracens under the brilliant rule of the Ommiade khaliphs, and they gave no heed to the intimations sent them of the dangers to which Europe would be exposed from the growing power of the Turks. In the reign of Charlemagne an attempt was made to unite the Eastern and Western empires by a marriage between that monarch and the empress Irene. Before any arrangements could be made, Irene was

deposed by her creature Nicephorus, and forced to bury her ambition in a convent. The profligacy and incapacity of Nicephorus reduced the Byzantine empire to the lowest state of wretchedness and weakness; the death of Harún-er-Rashíd alone saved it from being annexed to the khaliphate of Bagdad. At length Nicephorus was surrounded and cut off, with the greater part of his army, in a campaign against the Bulgarians. For nearly a century the Eastern empire was distracted by religious controversies respecting the worship of images, and at the same time engaged in a desultory war with the Saracens, which produced no decisive result to either party. It was not until Nicephorus Phocas was raised to the throne that the court of Constantinople began again to possess any influence in the affairs of Western Europe, or to be even recognized as an important political power.

Nicephorus was a general in the army of Romanus II.: under his guidance the Byzantine armies ceased to fly before the Saracens; they even gained several victories, and after the conquest of Aleppo appeared to have a very fair chance of recovering Syria. But in the midst of the campaign Nicephorus was informed that Romanus had been poisoned by the empress Theophano, who had seized upon the government, not as regent, but as sovereign in her own right. Nicephorus waited to learn the result of this revolution; but in the

mean time the emírs of Syria had recovered their strength, and the fortunes of the war were changed.

Theophano, to secure her power, resolved to unite herself to Nicephorus, who was esteemed a hero by the soldiers, and a saint by the clergy. Some canonical objections were urged against these nuptials: he had been godfather to one of the young princes, and this was supposed to create a spiritual affinity inconsistent with marriage.

Perjury was employed to satisfy these conscientious scruples, and those who were still dissatisfied were forced to silence by the confidence with which the emperor's ostentatious penances had inspired his superstitious subjects. As soon as the affairs of Constantinople were arranged, Nicephorus returned to Asia, where his lieutenant, John Zimisces, was carrying on a glorious war against the Saracens. Seconded by his able general, the emperor recovered Cilicia, subdued the greater part of the Northern Syria, and blockaded the important city of Antioch, which was captured by his generals in the following year. But his military glory was not regarded by his subjects as a sufficient compensation for the taxes he levied to support the expenses of the war, and for the licence he allowed to his soldiers. The clergy and monks were the first to become his enemies, because he applied a portion of their enormous revenues to the service of the state.

They declared loudly against this sacrilegious

appropriation of ecclesiastical property; and, when Nicephorus was anxious to have those who fell in battle against the Saracens ranked as martyrs, they produced a canon of St. Basil, which, so far from sanctifying warfare, excluded every one who had slain an enemy in battle for three years from the sacrament of the Church. An empire must assuredly be hastening to ruin when cowardice was proclaimed to be a religious duty.

Nicephorus was very anxious to recover Italy, where some of the southern provinces continued nominally subject to the Greek empire; he saw with indignation the usurpations of the popes, especially their assumption of the power of creating emperors of the West. Otho the Great, who had already received this title from pope John XII., was master of the greater part of Italy; and, naturally anxious to possess the remainder, hoped to obtain his desires by peaceful means, and sent ambassadors to ask the hand of the princess Theophano, with Apulia and Calabria as her dowry. The celebrated Luitprand, bishop of Cremona, was entrusted with this embassy; the only result of which was, to increase the national animosity between the Greeks and Latins.

The worthy bishop has left us a curious account of this unfortunate embassy, published in the great collection of the Byzantine historians. Nicephorus imprisoned the ambassador, half-poisoned him with the abominations of Constantinopolitan cookery, and shocked his religious prejudices by sundry

observances which the Latin church regarded as mortal sins, and the Greeks as absolutely essential to salvation. Luitprand took a characteristic revenge; he scrawled some barbarous hexameters on the walls of his prison, vituperating Byzantium, and all that it contained, more bitterly than poetically: he wrote to his master a long epistle, descriptive of his sufferings among these "beasts in semi-human shape," and quitted Constantinople with a fierce malediction on a capital so inhospitable and heretical. His portrait of the emperor Nicephorus is anything but flattering: "I found him," says the enraged prelate, "a man perfectly monstrous; pigmy-sized, fat-headed, mole-eyed, with a short, broad, coarse, and greyish beard; covered, like Topas, with long thick hair; an Ethiopian in colour; one whom you would not like to meet at midnight; pot-bellied; with thighs disproportionately long, legs very short, and splay feet; clad in a dirty white woollen dress that stunk from age and filth; wearing Sicyonian shoes; insolent in speech, a fox in cunning, a Ulysses in perjury and lying."

Luitprand then proceeds to give his master an interpretation of a prophecy, which it appears was at the time current both in Eastern and Western Europe. The mystic prediction was, "The lion and his cub shall destroy the wild ass;" which the Greeks understood to signify that the Eastern and Western emperors should destroy the Saracens. Luitprand indignantly rejects this interpretation,

and assigns good reasons to prove that Nicephorus was not a lion, but rather a wild ass; and that the lion and cub were beyond doubt Otho and his son, to whom he promises an easy victory over the ass Nicephorus, as soon as they should turn their arms against the East.

We must not omit the good bishop's farewell to Constantinople: "On the second of October, at ten o'clock, having departed from that city, once most opulent and flourishing, but now starved, perjured, lying, deceitful, fraudulent, rapacious, covetous, avaricious, and vain-glorious, after forty-nine days of ass-riding, walking, horse-driving, hungering, thirsting, sighing, groaning, weeping, and scolding, I came to Naupactus."

Though Nicephorus treated Luitprand thus harshly, yet he feigned consent to the marriage, and promised that he would speedily send the princess to Calabria. Otho sent a magnificent escort to receive her; but the perfidious Greeks fell upon the unsuspecting Germans, massacred a great number, and sent the rest prisoners to Constantinople. Justly enraged by this treachery, Otho invaded the Greek territories, captured several towns, ravaged the country up to the very gates of Naples, and returned to his own states laden with plunder.

Theophano, who had raised Nicephorus to the throne, was dissatisfied with the small share of power allowed to her by her husband; she had also engaged in a criminal intrigue with John

Zimisces, and, to gratify at once her ambition and lust, resolved to raise her paramour to the throne. She introduced Zimisces, with a band of assassins, into the palace at night; and Nicephorus, after enduring many indignities, fell beneath their daggers (A. D. 969).

With all his faults, Nicephorus was the most heroic ruler of the empire since the days of the *great Theodosius*; and, had he been supported by his subjects, he would probably have recovered all the Greek provinces of Asia. The empire of the Saracens was now fast declining, and their name had lost its terrors; one vigorous struggle might have restored the power of Constantinople; but an avaricious priesthood, a degraded court, and an impatient people were obstacles not to be overcome by the monarch who laboured for their regeneration.

Zimisces, on ascending the throne, declared that he wished to be regarded only as the colleague of the sons of Romanus, whom he regarded as his children. When he went to be crowned, as was usual, at the cathedral of St. Sophia, he was met at the door by the patriarch, who refused to admit him, sullied as he was by homicide and adultery, unless he gave a proof of his penitence by banishing Theophano. Zimisces readily embraced this excuse for delivering himself from an impious woman, whose crimes he could not avoid hating, though he had profited by them: he gave the required promise, and Theophano spent the remainder of her

miserable life in a convent. The new emperor more than rivalled the military glory of his predecessor: all the Mussulman powers, enraged at the fall of Antioch, had entered into a league for the recovery of that city, and their combined forces were assembled in Syria.

The imperial army, though far inferior in number, completely routed the Saracenic hosts, and this defeat destroyed their alliance. Zimisces, in person, marched against the Russians, who had become masters of Bulgaria, and in one brilliant campaign completely destroyed their power, and forced the barbarians to seek refuge in their native forests. Immediately after this glorious achievement he concluded a treaty with the emperor of the West, and sent the princess Theophano to be united to prince Otho. This princess resembled her mother only in beauty and name; chaste, pious, and benevolent, she was the greatest ornament of the German court while her husband lived, and the faithful guardian of her children after his decease.

Zimisces, encouraged by former success, resolved to attempt the recovery of Syria and Palestine: he was descended from an Armenian family, and shared in the reverence of his countrymen for the city of Jerusalem. The best soldiers of the empire were collected for this expedition, and the emperor himself took the command. The campaign was eminently successful; but, before its termination, Zimisces was seized with a dangerous disease, which compelled him to return to Constantinople. On

his road he observed some rich lands which he heard had been recovered from the Saracens by his own valour, and subsequently usurped by the eunuch Basil, who held the office of grand chamberlain: he could not refrain from venting his indignation at seeing the rewards of courage usurped by the degraded creatures of the court, and his incautious words were soon reported to the minister. Poison was mingled with the emperor's medicine by one of Basil's emissaires; and Zimisces only reached Constantinople to die (A. D. 975). Five months before his death the astrologers had promised him a long and happy reign, and the failure of the prediction was one of the first circumstances that brought their art into disrepute.

With Zimisces the last chance of retrieving the decay of the Byzantine empire disappeared. Basil II., who together with his brother Constantine succeeded to the throne, wasted the early part of his reign in riot and debauchery: his efforts to redeem his errors were scarcely less injurious to his subjects; for the wars in which he engaged required a large amount of taxation for their support, and he had granted the clergy an exemption from all charges for the maintenance of the state. The death of Basil was followed by a series of uninteresting revolutions produced by the criminal passions of his niece, the unprincipled Zoe; and while she made and unmade emperors at pleasure, dignifying each with the title of husband, the dynasty of the Seljukian Turks was established in

Anatolia, and their dominions were gradually extended to the shores of the Bosphorus. Romanus III. made a vigorous effort to check the progress of the Turks; he encountered their celebrated leader, Alp-Arslah, in the plains of Armenia: the combat was long doubtful, but one of the Grecian generals proved a traitor; the emperor was defeated and taken prisoner. His throne was usurped during his captivity, and he was only liberated to meet death from his rival. A period of confusion followed, which was terminated by the accession of Alexius Comnenus, a prince of great political wisdom, whose prudence under trying circumstances more than atoned for his deficiency in valour. During his reign the Byzantine empire was brought into a very close connection with the politics of Europe: we have already seen the dangers to which he was exposed by the enmity of the Normans; we shall, hereafter, see that he had to encounter even greater perils from the friendship of the Crusaders.

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